

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

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Transcript of an
Oral History Interview with DeLores Todd

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June 10th, 2019

Interview Information:

Interviewer: Ellen Brooks

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Interview Runtime: 02:38:33

Transcribed by: Yajaira Ramos-Ramirez, September 2019

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Collection: "She Changed the World" Oral History Project

Interview Summary:

This oral history with DeLores "Dee" Todd covers her general life history with a focus on her career in coaching and athletics administration as well as her experiences and accomplishments as a woman of color. Over the course of her career, she held positions at the high school and college levels in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Atlanta, and North Carolina, and traveled extensively domestically and internationally. At the time of the interview, Todd was working as a high school track coach in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Todd was born in Washington, D.C. and moved to Philadelphia and later, Camden, New Jersey, during her adolescence. She describes her experience alternating between foster care and living with her mother before going to live with her aunt and uncle, and the significant role her aunt played in her early life. As a young woman, Todd enjoyed roller skating and considered playing roller derby professionally, but instead chose to go to college and study science and physical education with the assumption that it would provide greater career opportunities. She attended Winston-Salem State University, where she met and worked with Clarence "Big House" Gaines.

She then describes her first job after college working in Bethesda, Maryland, as a high school teacher, and subsequent move to Chicago upon marrying her college sweetheart. During her tenure in Chicago, she received her master's degree, continued working as a teacher, and became involved in coaching, finding her passion in coaching track and field. She explains that during that time she and her husband grew apart and divorced. She became close to Dr. LeRoy Walker, who mentored her in coaching and later invited her to participate in U.S. Olympic Committee initiatives. She notes that Title IX was enacted in 1972, the same year she graduated from college, which increased opportunities for women in intercollegiate and scholastic sports despite some pushback in its early years. Todd goes on to describe coaching high school track while future Olympian Jackie Joyner attended school near Chicago.

During that time, Todd was looking ahead in her career with the intention of becoming an Olympic coach. One step on that journey was to work at the college level, and so she received her master's degree and began working toward her Ph.D. before choosing instead to accept a position as a track coach at Northwestern University. She muses on how her life might have been different had she continued her Ph.D. program. Around the same time, Todd mentions her foray into modeling at the behest of a friend, which led to her becoming the first black woman depicted on a Kellogg's Corn Flakes cereal box, and an early model for Fashion Fair Cosmetics. She

shares anecdotes of meeting photographer, Victor Skrebneski, and obstacles faced while being photographed for the Kellogg's box, and the unexpected fame she encountered as a result.

Todd discusses her experiences and challenges coaching track at Northwestern University. She notes the fact that her mentors were primarily men throughout her career, and the relative lack of diversity among coaching and athletics administrative staff throughout collegiate sports. After a few years at Northwestern, Todd moved to Atlanta to start a women's track and field program at Georgia Tech. Once again, she broke barriers for women and people of color, often without fanfare and in the face of opposition. Todd describes her coaching style and the relationships she formed with her colleagues and athletes.

In 1988, Todd accepted a position as Assistant Commissioner of the Atlantic Coastal Conference and moved to Greensboro, North Carolina. She describes her initial hesitation to move away from coaching, but explains how she was encouraged by mentors and colleagues along the way. Around this time, she began to take on mentorship and leadership roles in women's and minorities' professional groups. Todd elaborates on the challenges of coaching younger athletes and her efforts to help them apply lessons from sports to all of life. She also shares anecdotes on her relationships with coaching staff and colleagues in the ACC, and her acclimation to running other sports. Todd is considered the architect of the ACC championships, and explains how she received this title and describes the other challenges and triumphs in that position, touching on her travels and activities outside of work. She also discusses some of the difficulties of being a woman of color in her field, sometimes experiencing racial discrimination.

After seventeen years with the ACC, Todd reluctantly accepted a position as athletic director at North Carolina A&T University. She expresses her regret in taking the position, believing that it signaled the end of her career. After the end of her contract there, she lost a subsequent job and moved to Raleigh where her son and grandchildren lived. Todd talks about her love for dance and theater, raising her son with the support of her community, and her grandchildren. She also discusses working on the Olympic Project Gold initiative and updating other practices and strategies in athletics in the ACC and at North Carolina A&T State University. At the time of the interview, Todd had recently applied for another job as a college director of athletics, and discusses her feelings about job searching as an older woman.

She then shares her definition of success and describes the qualities of a notable woman. Another famous figure to whom Todd had connections was Oprah Winfrey, whom she met before she rocketed to fame. Todd ends by discussing a family tragedy and her volunteer work with InterAct, helping raise awareness and prevent domestic abuse.

Biographical Sketch:

DeLores Todd was born on February 29th, 1948 in Washington, D.C. She grew up in the northeast United States and attended college at Winston-Salem State University. Her career began in high schools in Washington, D.C. and Chicago, but she was later recruited to positions coaching and managing track and field at the college level. Along the way, she received a master's degree from Governor's State University and also worked as a model part-time, becoming the first African American woman to be featured on a Kellogg's Corn Flakes cereal

box. Todd's coaching career took her from Chicago to Atlanta, and later to Greensboro, North Carolina for a seventeen-year tenure as assistant commissioner of the Atlantic Coast Conference. She then moved on to work at North Carolina A&T State University for eight years before moving to Raleigh. Over the course of her career, Todd brought a unique perspective to challenges in coaching and athletics administration, often the first or one of few women of color in the field. She has one son, Stuart, and two grandchildren, Mia and Michael.

Archivist's Note:

Transcriptions reflect the original oral history recording. Due to human and machine fallibility transcripts often contain small errors. Transcripts may not have been transcribed from the original recording medium. It is strongly suggested that researchers engage with the oral history recording as well as the transcript. Timestamps are approximate.

Interview Transcript:

[00:00:00]

Brooks: Today is June 10, 2019. This is an interview with DeLores S. Todd, who was the assistant commissioner of the Atlantic Coast Conference and then the first female athletics director at North Carolina's A&T State among many other achievements and firsts. This interview is being conducted for the North Carolina State Archives She Changed the World Oral History Project. The interviewer is Ellen Brooks. So, we will just start at the beginning if you can tell me where and when you were born.

Todd: I was born in Washington, D.C. on February the 29th, 1948 and I came into the world a little bit confusing because, as you know, that is a leap year day. And they didn't know what to do as far as my birthday, so on my birth certificate it says February 29th-slash-March 1st. And their reasoning for that was because anyone that was born on the 29th after twelve noon they gave them March 1st. If you were born before twelve noon, they gave you 28/29. So, that's my story, I came in, people didn't what birthday to give me and, uh, it's probably been like that [both laugh] most of my life.

Brooks: So, when do you celebrate your birthday these days?

Todd: I do celebrate March 1st. Mm-hm.

Brooks: Okay. All right, that makes sense, gotta stay consistent.

Todd: Except for leap years I do every day. [Laughs] Twenty-eight, twenty-nine, first.

Brooks: Good, yeah. Um, so tell me a little bit about, uh, growing up in your family. What were—what did your parents do?

Todd: Well growing up, um, in my early years were not the most pleasant situation. My mother, for some reason, did not want a girl. I had two brothers, and so for the first few years of my life I lived in foster homes and every now and then would go back to live with my mother and brothers and go back to another foster home. So, unfortunately, I never went to the same elementary school twice. I had no recollection of any friends or anyone that I knew in elementary school. As fate would have it, my mother decided to leave Washington, D.C. and move to Philadelphia for a government job. My mother was very smart, she had worked at the Pentagon, she had a degree in music, I mean she was very, very smart. So, we moved to Philadelphia and, uh, that was the first time in a long time I had ever lived with my brothers so forth. And I wasn't the best child. I was, um, I didn't start fights but I would finish them [both laugh]. And um, I guess I was angry or whatever. And, uh, this wonderful aunt of mine who happened to be my mother's brother, um, her and my uncle lived in Camden, New Jersey which is right across the bridge from Philadelphia. Both of them worked in Philadelphia, they had

government jobs. My aunt was working for the Army Signal Corps and my uncle worked for the Navy Yard. So, she took the train to work every day and when she found out we were there she would come and visit every day and I would run up the street because she had this Maya Angelou look. She was a robust woman, she held her head very high, and she spoke very proper. And I would run up the street to her and greet her and she would say—well, she'd call me DeLores, she said, "DeLores, what did you have for dinner last night?" And I would tell her it was the same thing we had every night, you know, sardines and grits. And she was like That's not what kids need to eat and so forth. So, she continued to come over. So, she started cooking food and bringing food over in a shopping bag. And I don't know how they kept the food cause we didn't have refrigerators in offices and things like that. So, she would bring us food, and, um, one day she came I didn't run up the street to meet her because somebody had called my oldest brother a bad name, which I didn't know what it meant, but I know it didn't sound right. So, my oldest brother, he didn't pay attention he goes on about his business cause he was autistic so he just went on through him. But I was down the street just beating this boy up because he called my brother a name and my aunt came down the street and she grabbed me and she said, "Delores, little girls don't fight." And I said, "But Aunt Thelma, he did such and-so-and-so," so she decided—she said, you know what—my uncle and her could not have children and she said you know what, we're gonna try and take her and raise her. So, she asked my mother and of course the answer was yes. And, uh, the next day I got in a car, they came to pick me up and we took this ride across the bridge to Camden.

[00:05:07]

Uh, another home that I was gonna live in and another place I wondered how long I was gonna be there. And I remember every detail from riding in the car going across this bridge and going into this neighborhood with these nice, little, small yards. Yards weren't big as this room but they were very well-manicured and, uh, the house we stopped at was [Address]. And, uh, amazingly, throughout the course of a week I would look at a clock and it will say 12:27. And this probably happens four times a week, it's like that number is in my head. And I remember pulling up and, um, you know, going in and counting how many steps to the door, and just kinda looked, you know, a house, you know. This is now my home and, um, she gave me rules, which I wasn't used to rules and, um, she ended up being the best person, she saved my life. And she was very proper; I could not use slang in the house, I had to speak properly. I had to eat properly, I could not put my elbows on the table [both laugh] I had to have hands in the lap. I mean, she taught me all of these things that, you know, people don't teach their kids anymore. And she—I will say her name was Thelma Marshall, and I would say, "Aunt Thelma, where is the book at?" "Behind the preposition" [both laugh]. You know, that was—she had an answer for everything, but she was just—I didn't know it at the time but she saved my life. She made sure that I took college prep classes in high

school which I didn't realize that—I knew that there were very few minorities in my classes, but I never knew why. Because at the time, back in the fifties and sixties, the predominantly white schools would encourage the black kids to go into business, or what they call distributive education, which was you go to school half a day, and then you learn a trade, and then you go to work at an auto shop or something like that. So very few, um, African American kids were in college prep, but I was, and I didn't know why, that's where she put me, [both laugh] you know? Of course, I was prepared to go to college, but I didn't wanna go to college and—cause nobody said, you know, this is what you're supposed to do after high school. So, I was, um, a very good roller skater and when I first went to live with my aunt, the first Christmas I got a pair of roller skates. So, we did a lot of indoor skating, um, mostly indoor skating. So, we'd go to the skating rink and I was quite a good skater. And as it would have it the Philadelphia Warriors of the old roller derby came to the skating rink one time and they picked out some of us to come and audition, um, for this new team that was gonna come to Philadelphia. And we learned how to skate on the backtrack and, you know, the rules of the game and so forth. I made the team and, uh, they wanted me to sign a two-year contract saying that I was gonna stay. But something in my spirit just said, I don't know if this is what I really want to do. So, I didn't sign a contract, so they let me stay on the practice team. So, I did get to travel with them a little bit and practice with them. So, I did that for two years and worked in a factory for RCA [Radio Corporation of America] where they would make radios and all kinds of RCA products. And the best thing that happened, I got laid off and, um—

Brooks: And this is after high school? Or were you—

Todd: This was all after high school, yeah. I graduated from high school and then I went, you know, with the skating, and then I worked for RCA, and I worked for New Jersey Bell Telephone as information operator. And when I got laid off from, um, RCA, I had just had my twentieth birthday, and all of a sudden it kinda hit me like a brick, you don't have a skill and unless you want to work in a factory for the rest of your life or you want to work, you know, meager jobs, you're prepared to go to college. And so, at age twenty I decided to go to college. Didn't know where I was gonna go, but living in—right outside of Philadelphia, I knew Temple, I knew Rutgers South Jersey, I had taken a couple classes there, um, but I also knew Cheyney State which is right outside of Philadelphia. It was an HBCU [historically black colleges and universities] school. And I said, Maybe I'll go to Cheyney.

[00:10:26]

Well, I got accepted there and all of a sudden they were having accreditation problems and they didn't know whether they were going to close the school, so I X-ed that. I was dating a guy who, um, was from Martinsville, Virginia and he said, “My sisters went to Winston-Salem State in North Carolina and it's near

Martinsville. So, if you go there then my family will be close enough to check on you,” and so forth. So, I came to Winston-Salem State in 1968, sight unseen, uh, to go to college. And I went there and graduated magna cum laude. I was a cheerleader for four years because you couldn't do anything else, really. And I became very close to the legendary Clarence "Big House" Gaines and I didn't know how big he was until—I knew he was a big man, but I didn't know the significance of who this man was, you know. And I came in, I worked for him and he told me I was a slick northern girl and he [laughs], you know, said, “But I like you cause you're feisty,” you know, “you stand up for what you believe in.” And so, I graduated from Winston-Salem State and, um, I graduated early, so I graduated—I finished in—after student teaching, I finished in March, I believe. And so, I had March, April, and some of May before graduation, so I did not go back to Camden, I went back to Washington, D.C. cause all of my family was there. And I got a job as a substitute teacher, um, for a couple of months and I started applying for permanent jobs. And I didn't get, uh, I didn't get a job right away, so I subbed. So, all of a sudden, I was doing applications to—I don't think I did Washington, D.C., I don't think I wanted to work in the city. So, I was putting in applications to Prince George's County and Montgomery County. And I didn't get anything in Prince George's County 'cause they were filling up like crazy. All of a sudden, I got a phone call to come and interview for this school in Montgomery County, and it was called Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School. And I don't know if you've heard of that, but Bethesda-Chevy Chase, or BCC as it's called, was the high school that all the senators, and the congressmen, and the ambassadors to the United Nations, all of their kids went to this school. So, they taught English as a second language, they had three periods every period of the day. So, it was that many students that did not spe—English was not their first language. It was about fifty-six countries, almost I want to think. And I'm like, okay, and they're like, You have just the combination we're looking for, we're looking for someone to teach science and PE, and that was kinda like my double major. I had no intentions for teaching science [laughs], my intentions was all physical education. So, I was always, like, one step ahead of the kids because I was trying to—like, "I don't wanna teach this, I wanna teach this." So, my very first day of class, the teachers were there and I was getting my room ready, and these three men come to the door with suits on and badges and they said, Are you Miss Green? And I said yes and they said, Well we're United States Secret Service and we're here to do a background check on you. And I'm like, for what? [laughs] I just got out of college, I don't have a background [both laugh] you know? And so, he said, “Well, you're going to have Mary McGovern in your class,” and her father was the Democratic presidential candidate that year against Nixon. And so, I had had his daughter in my class, so that was my first experience like, Oh, [laughs] okay, this is interesting. But it was—it was great, I stayed there a year and I moved on. Got married and moved to Chicago, uh, got a couple

teachings jobs in Chicago, starting programs and starting athletic teams, you know; track mainly, cheerleading, I started a dance group.

[00:15:15]

I was just doing all those things and decided to work on my master's while I was at it. And it seemed like anything else that I filled my schedule with, which I, unfortunately, filled the schedule with stuff that I forgot that I was married and I needed to work on that. So, needless to say, my college sweetheart—we didn't stay married very long. I, uh—and I take full responsibility for that cause I just didn't—I didn't know. I mean, I had really never grew up in a situation where there was, you know, the man and the woman, and—you know, I just didn't know what that looked like. So, I'm married, so what? I just do whatever I want to do, you know? [laughs] So, so I, you know, finished that, and I worked, and I coached, and I learned everything that I could learn about track and field that became my passion. And when I was at Winston-Salem State, um, the guy that was the track coach at North Carolina Central University in Durham, he's the legendary Dr. LeRoy Walker. Dr. Walker eventually became the chancellor of North Carolina Central, but way back when I was in college I met Dr. Walker and decided that I was gonna adopt him as my uncle. And it kinda stuck that way, that he was my uncle. And everywhere that I would go to coach he would come and visit me and spend a couple days and he would walk around and tell this person what to do and that person what to do and I just walked behind him like a sponge trying to soak up everything. And this guy became—he had been an Olympic coach for six countries before the United States, um, made him the head coach. And, um, like I said he was chancellor of North Carolina Central and he was president of the United States Olympic Committee and the first, and only, African-American president of the USOC [United States Olympic Committee] and he led the contention in, uh, to Atlanta when we had the Olympics in '96. And I was involved in the whole organization of that because he had started two task force as president and those two task forces were to identify issues within the U.S. Olympic Committee that no one seemed to want to address; one was women and one was minorities. So, he formed two task force, um, called the Task Force on Minorities and Task Force on Women; I chaired the Task Force on Minorities and another lady did women. We brought in people to Colorado Springs and talked to them about the Olympic movement and how to be volunteers and what volunteerism looks like in the athletic world and, you know. I'm proud to say that almost everyone—we had a hundred total of—for the women and minorities, and almost all of them are either athletic directors, commissioners, um, oh my goodness, mayors of cities. I mean, unbelievable people that we brought in, you know, to teach them about the Olympic movement. So, Dr. Walker was the person that thought of that. And uh, I'm gonna pause right there and let you ask me a question [laughs].

Brooks: Sure, yeah, great! Um, you're doing great. Um, yeah, just a couple follow up: so, did you end up moving to Chicago because that was for your husband's work or his family, or—okay.

Todd: Yes, yeah, I moved—when I got married, I moved to Chicago, um, from D.C. so that's how I got to Chicago.

Brooks: And did you—so, I know you were talking a little bit about studying and being—wanting to be involved in PE, is that—was that kind of your career goal at the time when you left college, was to be a PE teacher?

Todd: I don't think I had a goal. Well, when I went to college, I initially thought that I was gonna be an elementary education teacher. So, we had this little program where the kids were bussed into Winston-Salem State. They were little kids and we kind of did a little camp. And I decided immediately that that was not what I wanted to do [laughs] because I'm not a little kid type of person, I'm like, I don't think so. I was always good in sports, and so, I—at that point I thought that I wanted to be a physical therapist and so that's why I took a lot of biologies and a lot of science classes, which you have to take as a Phys Ed major anyway, but I just did more. And, uh, somewhere along the line I thought I would be a veterinarian because I love animals, but then I found out that, um, you had to work on large animals as well the small animals [laughing] and that wasn't exactly what I had in mind.

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So, I just finished up, and finished up with health and PE and I finished in 1972. And 1972 is when Title IX was passed, uh, which opened up opportunities for women in intercollegiate or scholastic sports. And so, more women were being hired to—as PE teachers and coaches. And so, there was time there that most of the coaches were women. But as women, you know, got married or had children they didn't come back into the profession. And I used to always say, you know, Don't get pregnant and have, you know, children because you'll be replaced by “manimation”. So, all the women that left were being replaced by men. And I saw that trend and I kept saying, “This can't be,” and I decided that I was gonna work through it and I did. I mean, I worked through, sticking with it even though I did have a child.

Brooks: And when was your son born?

Todd: He was born in 1977.

Brooks: Okay. So, did you have any thoughts with the passage of Title IX? Had you been paying attention at all to—

Todd: I don't think I really knew what it was. I don't think it was something that I knew, I think it was something more, uh, after the fact that I found out that Title IX was

passed in '72. It was not something that, you know, I even thought about until later when I looked back and said, Oh, so this is why this was happening and that was happening, yeah. Because Title IX was not really enforced on any level until the late 80s, early 90s, and I happened to be involved on a committee that was challenged with coming up with how Title IX was going to be measured to see if you were in compliance. And so, it was a long time before they actually really took it seriously.

Brooks: Wow, um, so you said you were coaching mostly high school while you were getting your master's degree—

Todd: Yes.

Brooks: —simultaneously, and, um, you went to school in Park Forest?

Todd: I was coaching at, um, Rich Central High School and then Thornridge High School. Um, when I had my son and came back, I came back to Thornridge which was a larger school than Rich Central. And total, we won, like—between the two schools we won eleven conference championships, um, five district championships, took a lot of people to state, um, I had the—I always tease Jackie Joyner-Kersey and tell her that, Remember I coached the last white girl that beat you in the state championship [laughs], and I did in the 400. And that's a funny story, you know, in itself. And Debbie—she's now something really big in the medical, um, profession out of Michigan and she's doing a great things. But she was, um, she was a rising senior when I got there and I coached at another high school in the same area. So, I decided to, um, meet with all of the people who have been on the team before, a one on one, and I would ask them, you know, What are your goals? So, you kind of know how hard you can push somebody, you know. Somebody says, just I wanna run, then you know they're probably not gonna be someone that you can push real hard. So, when I got Debbie, her first answer was, “I wanna beat Jackie Joyner.” And I'm like, Oh really? [laughs] And so, I had to—previous year's state meet in front of me and I looked at it and, like, Oh, she was second to her. Well, everyone knew Jackie because she was great in high school. She came right out of basketball and, you know, won everything she did in high school and I got to know her when she was in the tenth grade cause she came to a camp.

[00:25:03]

So, I said, “Well, you know, this is possible.” So, we, um, we went on and my girl was just—she was just fantastic, but she was a little bit of a head case. Um, sometimes she was so far ahead of everyone she'd run off the track. Just like, I'm bored, nobody in front of me, nobody I can run with. She'd run off the track. So, I knew to get her to the state meet we had to get through the district meet. And [laughs] I used to do crazy things, but I decided—I said, She is gonna have to stay on this track. So, I put as shot putter or discus thrower in every corner of the track [laughs] and so she looked up, they gave her a fist, like, if you walk off we're

gonna punch you in the face [laughs]. And so, she ends up winning the districts. So we go to state and her and Jackie are in two different heats, uh, cause we had a two-day meet. And so, the first day my girl breaks the state record and she ran the fastest time ever run in the state in the 400. Jackie ran the second fastest time. So, the finals come and we're on our way to the finals and I'm walking with Debbie and she's walking ahead of me and she's shaking her head doing all kinds of—I said, “Debbie, what's the matter with you?” And she turns and looks at me and she says, “You wouldn't understand,” and she turns back around. I said, “Debbie, what's wrong?” I said, “Are you nervous? Yeah, it's okay. Let's talk about it.” She said, “Coach you wouldn't understand.” I said, “Well help me. What am I supposed to understand?” So, she looked me right in the eye and she said, “Do you realize I am the only white girl in this race?” I said, “And your point?” And she said, “I told you, you wouldn't understand.” I said, “Well, help me with this Debbie. What am I supposed to understand?” She said, “You don't see? They're gonna all be after me.” I said, “Well, honey, don't let them catch you [laughs], just run for your life.” She ran that race and [laughing] she came to the line like she was running for her life and won, beat the state record again. I mean, just crushed it. And Jackie was second and we laugh about that often. And Debbie ended up going to Michigan State, you know, on a full scholarship. Uh, Jackie was a year younger than her, so that was a fun time. I mean, just—I just had great experiences with kids, you know, just really wonderful experiences. So yeah, that's how I got to Illinois.

Brooks: And you were working on your master's degree?

Todd: I was working on my master's, um—

Brooks: What made you want to pursue a master's?

Todd: Well, good question. I wanted to be an Olympic coach and I thought that a step to be an Olympic coach you would have to be a college coach. And to be a college coach at that time, most of the time, they wanted to you to have at least a master's even though, uh, you didn't teach for some schools, like, depending on the size of the school you didn't teach. But I was also married and I, um, knew that I couldn't just up and just go anywhere for a job. So, I was working on a master's and—teaching in high school we had—if you had your bachelor's plus fifteen, you got, you know, more money than if you had a master's. There's a scale that the more education you had, the more you made. And so, that was a lot of my motivation was, you know, to get that. And I got my master's and started working on my doctorate. I didn't know how to sit down, you know [Brooks laughs]. So, I started working on working on my doctorate and I actually had finished all of my coursework and long [lo] and behold this, um, lady who was the track coach of the University of Illinois was a very good friend of mine; I was doing—I would do her camps. So, I went to the camp one year and she said, “You know what Dee,” she said, “Northwestern University is looking to hire a track coach,” and she said, “I think you would be great.” Well, that perked my interest because I

lived in the Chicago area and I'm like, Oh good, I don't have to move, maybe I can get this job. So, I went after the job and I went up for an interview.

[00:29:53]

And at that time I was also one of the top five models in Chicago and I had been on Kellogg's Corn Flakes box and had introduced Fashion Fair Cosmetics, so I was a pretty popular face in a lot of magazines and things. And so I went for my interview and I remember Ted Leland, who went on to be the athletic director at Stanford for many years, he interviewed me and when I walked and he said, "If I didn't look at your credentials and see the things that you have done there's no way you can convince me you're a coach." He said, "I haven't seen a coach look like this before." And I was trying to, like, really play down but you just didn't see, a). women and then a woman that did not seem to want to be masculine for lack of a better term. And he said, "But I know that you can coach because you've got Dr. LeRoy Walker here and we all admired Dr. Walker—" 'cause everyone knew who he was. And I don't know who else but I had some really good references. he said, "Hm, you know, if you can do this then—" so, they hired me. And when they hired me I had just been told by my advisor at grad school that I had to do—before to get enrolled for my PhD I had to do a six-month internship because my degree was in behavior psychology. And I had to do—not a dissertation, but you had to do more like a residency, um, you know, to be a psychologist. And, um, I went to the people at Northwestern and I'm like, you know, I finished my course work and is there any way I can, like, start this job six months from now? Absolutely not, they said, you know, you've got to make a choice. And um, you know, we're just starting, really just starting and this is our first full-time position, uh, for women's track so, you know, so we can't postpone it. So, I made the choice of going to Northwestern and I never did finish, you know, my doctorate, so.

Brooks: Um, do you have any regrets about not finishing or do you feel like that that was the right choice?

Todd: I do, I feel it was the right choice. Now, now as I have gotten older and athletics is not—I wonder if I had taken that role—road or the one that I took, I see myself as maybe being a college president or something cause I'm always gonna shoot for the highest I can go wherever. But I don't have any degree—any remorse; I think I did the right thing. I mean, at that time in athletics you didn't find women that were—that have PhDs. Now you see it a lot, but at that point—I remember my supervisor told me, she said, "You don't want to have more education than the people who supervise you," and she said, "that could probably hold you back." And at the time it probably would have. So, it was a sign of the times; I had to do what I felt was best and that's the road I took.

Brooks: And can you talk about more a little bit about modeling and about the Kellogg's box?

Todd: Sure. I was teaching in high school and I was, um, a friend of mine happened to open a model agency, her and another lady. The friend—going off track a minute—that started this agency actually was this person that introduced Oprah to Stedman, it was a blind date. So, she was, you know, very well known in Chicago and so forth. So, she called me one day, she said, “Look, I need you to get me some pictures cause I started—opened this modeling agency,” and I’m like, I’m not thinking about that. And she said, “Just give me a picture, just get me a picture.” And I was so into track that if it didn’t run, jump, hurdle, or throw I had no time for it [laughs]. So, I finally got her picture and she called me one day and she said, “Listen, um, McDonald’s is looking for a new face for a Christmas, um, gift certificate ad and we would like for you to go on that audition.” So, eh, I went on the audition.

[00:34:58]

And they said, Okay, this is a two to three-hour photoshoot. So, they tell me where to go. I had no idea what I was doing and I, um, did the role—the picture was—I was supposed to be waking up Christmas morning and I got my stocking and I’m pulling these gift certificates out for McDonald’s where the guy that was playing my husband was sitting there watching me. Well, the guy that was playing my husband is a big-time actor named Steve McWilliams [Williams] and at the time, had he done—? He was the black cop in *The Blues Brothers*.

Brooks: Oh.

Todd: Yeah. So, he was modeling with me and we finished, it was about two and a half hours. So, if you finished on the half hour they paid you for, like, three hours. So they came and said, So, how much is your hourly rate? I don’t know, this is my first job. What do you mean I have an hourly rate [laughs]?

Brooks: Yeah [laughs].

Todd: And they said, What—how much are you to be paid? I said, “I don’t know. No one ever told me.” They said, I’ll tell you what, since you were with Steve McWilliams [Williams] we’re gonna start you off with \$150 an hour. I said, “Huh? [Both laugh] What?” So, they gave me \$150 an hour for three hours’ work and I’m like, This is not too bad, this is not too bad. So, I was still into my coaching and I still—if I could get downtown Chicago for an audition, I would; if I couldn’t, it didn’t bother me. So, I didn’t have a portfolio, which to get that you have to kind of go around to photographers and ask if they would do a photoshoot of you and then you put their pictures in your book. That’s how you develop your portfolio. Well, I didn’t have time for that. So, I get a call one day, again, from Barbara and she says, “Look, I need you to go downtown to Johnson Publishing Company,” which is the, uh, company that did *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines and the Ebony Fashion Fair, that kind of thing. They are bringing out a new makeup for

women of color and they're having a nationwide audition. She said, "You need to go down there." I said, "Barbara, I have track practice" [laughs]. She's like, If you don't get yourself down there—she said, "You can come back to track practice." So, I went down. And I wasn't dressed; I had on a blue jean skirt, and boots, and a vest and I didn't care anything about it, no portfolio. I get down there and there was like seventy-five women and they were decked out, I mean, big portfolios. So, I'm looking around like, Why am I here, why am I here? I didn't go to college for this. And I'm just fussing to myself.

So, after we went through the little audition, they asked you—they called you in two by two, they wanted to look at your book. Of course, I didn't have a book. I came back driving to south side of Chicago to track practice and I was really hot. And so, I called—we didn't have cell phones and things, so I went in the office, I called Barbara. I said, "Barbara, don't ever send me on anything like that again. I was so unprepared, I have never been so disappointed, I've—" I'm just fussing and she's laughing at me. And I said, "Why are you laughing?" And she said, "Because we sent fifteen girls over there and you got the job." I said, "Do you know who you're talking to?" [laughs]. And she said, "Yes, and do you know how exciting this is?" I'm like, What do you mean? She said, "Well, Victor Skrebneski is the photographer," and he was the top fashion photographer in the world at the time. He did *Vogue*, you know, *Mademoiselle*, he did the covers. He had just shot Diana Ross and had big portraits—I mean, this was the guy that they had hired to do this photoshoot to introduce Fashion Fair, and they picked five of us out of that group. And, um, she said, "You're to go meet him, he wants to meet you before the photo shoot." So, I go down, and at that time—this had to be late 70s—he had closed circuit TV before anyone else and he could see who was coming to the door. So, my appointment was at eleven and I got there about ten forty-five, ring the doorbell and he opens the door and tells me to come in and he looks at me and he says, "Where have you been?" And I'm like, I thought my appointment was at eleven o' clock? And he said, "Why am I just seeing you?" And so, I'm looking totally confused, like, what is he talk—I'm fifteen minutes early, you know, what's he talking about. He said, "Why am I just seeing you?" And I said, "I don't understand what you're saying."

[00:40:06]

He said, "You should be in New York," he said, "you should be one of the biggest models in the country." And I'm scratching my head like, What is he looking at [laughs], you know? And he just kept going on and on, he said, "How tall are you?" I said, "I'm 5' 5" and a half." He said, "You're—" no, I said, "I'm 5' 6". He said, "You're 5' 5" and a half." And I had on boots and that's how keen his eye was that he could tell exactly how tall you were. And I was twenty-eight years old at that time and that was, quote, unquote, "old" for modeling, but I didn't look it. And so, that picture up there became the, um, cover of their first calendar; it was all in the stores, all on billboards. But once Victor Skrebneski photographed you, apparently, everyone in the business knew his work, so the minute they see that in

the book then they're like, you know, this is big time because this person has been photographed by Victor Skrebneski. So, from that point on every job or audition I went to, I got it. So, I had done some print work for Kellogg's and, um, they called and asked my—Barbara—they said, Look, they said, we'd like to put her on the cereal box. And so, Barbara was really excited that somebody from her agency, you know, is gonna be on a cereal box. So, she called me and, um, she said, "They want to put you on the cereal box." And I thought, Okay. Still, in my mind I didn't have any idea what this meant. So, I go to the photoshoot and they are [laughs], they're trying to get the lighting right for my complexion because they weren't used to photographing people of color, and putting it on cardboard and all the kind of little things that you have to do. So, I—they were putting this makeup on me and they were doing my hair like a bouffant. I'm like, I don't look like this when I coach, I mean, I'm more fashionable than this [Brooks laughs]. And they said, Well, you know, we can't have any—you can't look sexy, you have to look like the girl next door. This is, uh, Kellogg's Corn Flakes, this is the cereal of, you know, everybody. Eh, still, it didn't matter to me, I didn't understand. And they were not also used to shooting food. And so, they would take a bowl and they, you know, kept pouring water—milk in it and the strawberries and before you could get two or three shots it's soggy. So somebody came up with the bright idea to pour Elmer's glue in the bowl, put the Corn Flakes on top, put the strawberries there, and then cover it and shellac, and then asked me to stand there with this thing and— [sniffs, laughs]. And I'm inhaling this, and I'm like, Oh goodness.

So, we got through that photoshoot, and the first go-around my complexion came off very gray so they had to keep going through, trying to get something right. But eventually, when the box hit, you know, it hit the, um, it just hit, you know. They would do maybe fourteen people a year and that box would run for about a year and a half. And so, they would always bring the same number of boxes to grocery stores, you know, it didn't matter who's face was on it, they just bought them. And it got to be—I was teaching in high school and they would bring the boxes in the stores and within hours all my boxes were gone because I had kids I was teaching and they were like, Our coach is on the Kellogg's box, and it was all kinds of stories and things. Still, I still did not know the impact of being on the cereal box. I was just kinda taking it in stride, I mean—people following me out the store to get autographs and I think, Oh this is not gonna last long. I didn't know that I was the first black female on the box. I didn't know it; I mean, I'd never paid attention to it. So, almost everything that I've done, I've kind of fallen into it and then I kind of find out later that, oh, oh really? This is what happened? And that's how I got on the Kellogg's box, it was probably the biggest thing I've ever done.

[00:44:58]

Brooks: Did they have like a little blurb about who you were on the box?

Todd: Yeah I've got stories—no, the box just had—I have a coach's shirt on and the box just shows, you know, me eating the cereal with a coach.

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: Yeah, but they kept, you know, doing a lot of stories on me and, and saying, you know, This lady did this—and, you know, this has gone on now for thirty-seven years.

Brooks: I feel—so nobody during the photoshoot or nobody at Kellogg's was like, By the way, this is a big deal; you're the first black woman?

Todd: Uh-uh, because the photographers that they hire—there was one photographer in Chicago and there was one photographer in LA [Los Angeles]. So, every other year, the photographer in Chicago would do all the boxes and then the next year—so no, they would just kinda—at that point they pretty much just put ordinary people on there. There was this, like, you didn't have to be anything special but you had to at least a good reputation for something. And mine happened because it was the year of the Olympics and I was a track coach and I was a model. So, that's kind of how I got on; I was coach and a model. So, I could've been just any model on there and that's how that happened and it just blew up. And so now, when you go into Battle Creek where the Kellogg's headquarters is they have what they call a wall of honor, so everyone that's ever been on a cereal box—their pictures are there. And now, that is neat, that's pretty neat. And as I grew older and really found out a whole lot about this, I was like, Wow, that's pretty cool [laughs], you know, that I've been on this cereal box.

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: And even now it's like, this was 1980, we're in 2019, people still find it fascinating.

Brooks: It is, yeah.

Todd: [Laughs] And I just think, Huh, I was in the right place at the right time, and really I was.

Brooks: Yeah, it wasn't even, like, your goal.

Todd: No.

Brooks: And you weren't aiming to get on a cereal box. Just happens.

Todd: Nope, not at all.

Brooks: Yeah, wow. So, um, how long did your modeling career last?

Todd: I may have done one or two ads after the Kellogg's box but then I went to Northwestern and then I pretty much stopped. So, I would say a total of five years, yeah.

Brooks: Okay, and when did you start at Northwestern?

Todd: I started at Northwestern in '81.

Brooks: Okay.

Todd: And actually, Northwestern just put out a story last week called, uh, [pause] what was that story called? Cause they called and they did the story about the NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] and black cultures at major universities and Northwestern did a piece saying—because I was the first black female coach at Northwestern, and Dennis Green who went on to coach the Minnesota Vikings was the first black male, he was the football coach. And it talked about us coming in at , you know, about the same time and here we are in 2019 and only three black head coaches have been hired at Northwestern in that amount of time. And the fact that Dennis Green and I both came at the same time, we both left at the same time in '86. He left to be, uh—to go with the San Francisco 49ers and I left to go and start the program in Georgia Tech in Atlanta. So, we kind of left at the same time and they had—they've had three African American head coaches, no other woman; I'm still the only woman that has ever been a head coach at Northwestern.

Brooks: Wow.

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: That's—

Todd: I know [laughs].

Brooks: I was going to say surprising, but mm-hm [laughs]. So, what was that—what was it like at Northwestern? Was it pretty much what you expected of a head coaching job?

Todd: I don't think I knew what to expect. I had been a high school teacher, high school coach. I knew I knew track and field but I didn't—I don't think I realized how much collegiate coaching was and that that is your full-time job. And you've got recruiting and you've got budgets you've got to balance and you've got to travel. And at that time I drove everywhere. We didn't have people to drive us, you know? Um, we didn't have an athletic trainer so I picked up a lady that was a massage therapist and I took her along and she would, you know, massage the girls and flush the lactic acid out. So, I just did what—I have always been very

good of figuring it out. When I get there I'm gonna go gung ho. I think I'm afraid to fail; I can't just sit back and let stuff happen, imma go at it.

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And I went at it and I was hired in August. And they had had a part-time coach and he had given, I wanna say, four or five scholarships out and at that time Northwestern was fourteen or sixteen thousand dollars a year, which back then, that was a lot of money, you know, we're talking about the early 80s. And he gave people full scholarships that were fifty-six in the state cross country meet and I'm thinking, They could have run on my high school team. And so, I had to figure out how to change that, so I was pretty tough on them workout-wise and I really still don't know what I was doing. I—it's always come to me and I always had friends that were willing to help me and there weren't women out there that could help me because women just weren't in those roles. So, all of my mentors were always men, all of them, practically. And I knew a guy named Steve Miller, and Steve Miller used to coach the track team at the high school near where I was, at the high school level. And he was a person—his school had an indoor track. So, we used to go over there and practice cause my school didn't. So, I got to know Steve very well. Well Steve, just to give you an idea of who he is, he is now the, um, manager and the executive director at the Andre Agassi Foundation, so he's, like, huge. But when he left the high school, he went to coach at Cal Poly San Obispo, then he went to Kansas State. And he was a track coach first and then he became the athletic director. Well, that's when I was at Northwestern and our colors, ironically, were the same: purple and white. And I would call him and ask him how to do the workouts and how do I learn, you know, how to do the college versus the high school. So, he was constantly showing me, Dr. Walker was showing me, you know, how I need to do my workouts and what part of the season, you know, just the whole thing. So, he—so, then they told me I could get an assistant coach and Steve called me one day, he said, “Do you remember John Capriotti?” I said, “Yeah, he ran for you.” He said, “Yeah, he ran for me out of Cal Poly,” he said, “he just finished college, he's back in Chicago, he's looking for a job.” And he said, “He would be a great distance coach for you,” because John ran the 1500. And, uh, he said, “You need to hire him.” I'm—okay, so I hired him. Well, right now, John Capriotti is vice president of Nike, all of Nike.

Brooks: Wow.

Todd: He—when I left Northwestern they wouldn't hire him, so Steve hired him at Kansas State to coach. So, when Steve left to go to Nike, then he put John in—he took John everywhere he went, so when he went to Nike and his role changed he pulled John into Nike. Yeah, so, these were my friends and John's like my son. And so, John has been instrumental in helping me, since I coach high school track now—uniforms, you know, he's donated uniforms to my team and I have had some wonderful people in my life, just wonderful people. And so, that experience at Northwestern and [pause] Dennis Green—everybody was really nice to me. I

can't say anything negative. That's where I start I've got my start as a college coach, they will always be near and dear to my heart, you know? But the Big Ten was a little bit more progressive than a lot of other conferences because, at the time, um, the Big Ten had nine black head coaches which was unheard of back then. So, throughout the Big Ten they had nine.

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Um, and in track alone it was—on the women's side it was myself, Ohio State, and Michigan State, and then on the men's side it was Michigan, Iowa—Michigan and Iowa. So, we had, like, five in the Big Ten alone. So, I didn't think anything was any different, so when I got an offer to go to Georgia Tech it came, again, at the right time. I had just recently gone through a divorce and then I felt like I could just up and move. So, I got the job at Georgia Tech to start their program. And—

Brooks: Women's track and field?

Todd: In track and field. So, I was their first coach at Georgia Tech and, um, I did not know that I was, like, the only one in the whole ACC [Atlantic Coast Conference]. So, I was, like, the first black coach in the whole Atlantic Coast Conference and this was 1985. I didn't know that. They did a story and they talked about black coaches in major conferences and they said the Big Ten had nine, the SEC [Southeastern Conference] had one, and then the ACC had one, Ms. Todd. Oh, again [laughs] you know, so that's how I started there.

Brooks: Yeah. Once you realized it that—how did you feel?

Todd: You know what, I guess I never really gave it a whole lot of thought. Because I guess I felt like—well, you know, I got the job and I was kind of used to it. So, it didn't matter, it's just, you know, do your job, just do a good job. And um, as it turned out, I had to build that program, block their first All-Americans and so forth, and we recruited, and had some wonderful memories. One of my best memories is a young lady who walked into my office, and she was beautiful, almost six feet tall, tall, blonde gorgeous girl. And she comes in the office and she has a newspaper article and she says, "I'm looking for Coach Todd." I said, "I'm Coach Todd." So, she introduced herself and she says, "My name is Anne-Marie [Owipokola ?]" And I said, "It's what? [Both laugh]" She told me again, and she said, "I got this article out of the newspaper," and she said that you're starting a track program. And she said, "I just finished up—" what do you call it, "—an exchange where I went high school here for a year and now it's time for me to go back to Finland, but I want to stay in the United States." And she says, "I ran track." And I said, "Well really? What was your event?" So, she told me she'd run the 800 in Finland and I said, "Really? Well, what was your time?" And she told me something like 2:07, and I said, "Honey, come in and have a seat, [both laugh] you found a home." So, I then had to go through getting her in school. So, they

had some kind of test that they gave to foreign students and apparently, she did horrible, I mean horrible. So, the registrar called me, and he said, “Dee, this girl that you sent over here, she tested horrible. I can't admit her, I just can't.” And I said, “What do you mean, you can't?” He said, “She,” and quote, “she tested as if she was a moron.” And I said, “Maybe she just doesn't test well,” I mean—I said, “I just don't feel that, I feel good about this girl. What do I need to do to get her in?” And he said, “Well, let me think about it.” And he called back and said, “I'll tell you what, imma let her in but she's gonna be your project. If she messes up and does bad, then it's going to be a reflection on your whole team in terms of academics.” And he said, “Plus, she wants to major in electrical engineering.” I said okay [Brooks laughs]. I just believed in her, I just believed in her. I said, “I'll take my chances.” So, I got her. She graduated magna cum laude in electrical engineering, went on to, um, Harvard, got an MBA, came back to Atlanta, and married the biggest plastic surgeon in the whole city of Atlanta. And we used to tease her and say, Anne you're going to marry a Smith or a Jones. Who did she marry? A Jones [laughs]. So she—so, I said, “Well, Anne, when you walked across the stage and you had to shake the registrar's hand you should have reminded him that you was a moron, that they weren't going to let you in,” you know, as she had all her drapes and stuff like that.

[01:00:27]

So, she's one of my projects that I'm so proud of. And so, when I go to Atlanta now, I have a brother that's in a nursing facility—he had a stroke, um, I'll go there and her and her husband will have dinner for me and so forth. And she's, you know, she's so thankful, she said, “You know, if it wasn't for you I wouldn't be here, I wouldn't be here.” So, she's very thankful, her husband's very thankful, uh, he was on his way out one day, he said, “No, I had to stay here and meet who Coach Todd was because if it wasn't for you I never would have found this beautiful girl.” And so I have some just really great memories, you know, of young people, and I think I have this—I don't know what it is, but it's—like, I have a knack or something for seeing greatness in people even when they don't see it, I see it. And usually when I say, You're going to be such and so and so, I may not have the exact thing right but I see greatness in them and I remind them of that. And over the years I just can't tell you how many students come back and said, You believed me when I didn't believe in myself. I'm a huge motivator; I will not allow you to make excuses. I tell them, Excuses are tools used by losers; we are not gonna make excuses. And I just push them, and encourage them, and talk to them, and they come back and they just appreciate it so much.

And so, Georgia Tech was a great situation, um, but I wasn't making a lot of money because the men's track coach, who had gone to Georgia Tech—and Georgia Tech used to be all male, so when they were bringing in women that's how they had to increase their sports for women. So, at that time, Georgia Tech was still 80% male, and he had coached there, he had run there, but he also was in real estate, and he also was on city council. So, he did not want to make more than

a certain amount of money because it would have put him in a different tax bracket, so I was kind of held to what he was making minus one dollar. So, I would make the same thing minus a dollar, so the—cause he made more than me. Well, you know, I was newly divorced and, you know, I wasn't making enough money to really do well. I mean, they gave me a company car, all those kinds of things but it just wasn't, you know, enough money. So, the athletic director, who was just a wonderful guy, and again, he's another famous guy, uh, his name is Dr. Homer Rice. And Dr. Rice had been, um, I think he had been the football coach with the Lions or something, and he had been a great athletic director and he came up with this program called Total Person, where we tried to make athletes understand that it was the total person that we were looking at, not just your athletic ability, but who you are as a person, and how you act, and things like that. So, he was a great guy and I remember him sitting me down one day and he said, "You know, Dee, you're like a professional at rookie camp. And, you know, coach is going to retire next year. I will make you director of both, you know the men and women." Well, in the meantime—I mean, this guy would do some crazy things, like, he didn't want the girls on the bus with him and all kind of stuff. And I—that's okay, I'll go find me a short bus and have somebody drive me [laughs] just so I could—you know. I was always—I never got angry, I would always come back with something like, I'll show you. I'll do this anyway. So, um, he—so we had gone to—we had come up here to Duke for the ACC Championships. And when I came in, the guy who was the assistant commissioner for the ACC, he came up to me, he said, "I came over from Greensboro," which I didn't know the geography, "just to see you."

[01:05:05]

And he said, "We have a new commissioner, and we're going to have two openings," at the time. And he said, To be a commissioner—he kind of explained that that was, like, you know, on the parallel line with athletic director, cause I didn't even know anything about conference office or anything like that, it didn't, you know, concern me. And he said, "I think we're going to hire two people; one is for compliance and one is for championships," but the main focus was going to be women's basketball. And he said, "The commissioner wants to hire—at least one of those positions he wants a woman, but the, um, sports management person, he wants that person to have been a coach. And I think you would be perfect, and we think you would be perfect so I came over to talk to you about that job." Well, this is a track meet, okay [Brooks laughs]. So, I listened and, uh, went back to Georgia and he called me and he said, "You know, come on in for an interview." So, I went in for the interview, I didn't know what I was doing, I just kind of went in. And, you know, they kind of explained everything to me and took me around, did the usual, showed the houses, and the area and stuff. And I said, "Okay, I'm going to Eugene, Oregon for the national championship. Here's the number of the hotel that I'm staying at so if you need to get ahold of me you can reach me through the hotel," cause we didn't have cell phones. And I went on out there and

came back and I never heard from him. So, I just assumed that, you know, I didn't get the job.

So, I went on about my business and I came back from practice one day and there's a note on my door that said, Call Gene Corrigan. So, I go into the office and I called him and he said, "Dee, Gene Corrigan here, how would you like to come and work for me in the ACC office?" I was like, really? And he said, "Yeah, look, you, know, I got the moving company, we'll send you the numbers." He didn't even let me say yes, he just kept on talking, And I was shocked cause I didn't know what I was in for. So, I did that and, um, Dr. Rice told me, he said, "This is a great position for you, um, so and so, you know, the conference is expanding." Again, I did not know that I was going to be the first woman and the first minority in the conference. I didn't know, just moving on. So, I got to Greensboro and, you know, they treated me just wonderful. Gene would sit me down like he was talking to his kids and he would say, This is not going to be easy all the time but I just want you to know that I have your back and, um—I can honestly say, I don't care where we were in the United States, if we were at a convention, or the Final Four, or whatever, if I was in voice range where he was standing, he could be talking to the president of the CBS or ESPN or some Bowl, or whatever, he would say, Dee, come here, and I'd go over and he would say, I'd like for you to meet my assistant. So, he introduced me to all the movers and shakers in athletics. And because I was so different everybody remembered me, and I have him to thank for everything, just everything. 'Cause I did not know what I was doing and he—you know, basketball was not my thing, track was. But a guy named Fred Barakat, who been a long-time commissioner of the ACC, um, he did men's basketball and he had been putting on the ACC basketball tournaments, and he sat me down and taught me how, you know, what to look for, how to do it. and the whole thing. So, I mean, again, it was always men that were mentoring me. And, um, as I got out there more and started joining women's groups then I became the woman that was mentoring women, and I sort of really looked after women and ethnic minorities. I would go to a basketball game at a high school and I might see an African American doing a pretty good job and I'd go and make a point of introducing myself and saying, I'd like for you to come to the camp and so forth. So, Dee Kantner, who just became, um, she went into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame on May third, if you look at any women's basketball games, the big ones, she's always on it; always on them.

[01:10:33]

She's the top women's official in the country. She makes over \$350,000 just doing officiating and she was twenty-six years old when she came to work for the ACC. And at that time, we only had two-person officiating crew and she had run track at Pittsburgh and she was just lightning-fast. So, it came time to pick some officials for the ACC tournament; I picked her. Well, the other conferences called; they said, I can't believe you put her on the ACC tournament, she's too young, she's too young to be out there, why would you put her? I said, "Cause she's fast [Both

laugh], you know, I don't know if she can officiate or not but she can run,” you know. I had that track—one-track mind, right? And I gave her her first tournament, and she said that—when she got into the Hall of Fame, she said, “This lady believed in me. I was twenty-six years old.” I gave her her first tournament. Now she's like—if you see a big game, she's on it. She's on it and she's now fifty—I think she just turned fifty or fifty-one, and she lives in Charlotte. Great—another person, great person.

Brooks: Yeah, mm-hm. I think—yeah, she's on the list. Yeah, I ran into her name while I was doing a little research on you.

Todd: Oh.

Brooks: Yeah, and some paths obviously crossed in different articles about, you know. Yeah.

Todd: Yeah, Dee Kantner, she's fantastic, fantastic.

Brooks: Yeah, that's neat.

Todd: So again, another boost and—yeah, you know, and again, I've done all of these things but I don't think about it.

Brooks: Yeah [laughs].

Todd: I'm just like, “Oh, you'll do good here, you'll do good—” and it turns out that, you know, they do these wonderful, fantastic things and then they say, I have you to thank. And I'm just kind of doing what I do, you know? I just love mentoring people; I love seeing people grow. I mean, I've never been jealous or envious cause I just feel like there's something for all of us, you know, I just feel like that. And I don't mind complimenting, I don't mind pushing, I don't mind, uh, doing things for other people to help them get ahead, and that's just—that's what I do.

Brooks: Has your mentoring ever met with any pushback, has there ever been anybody who didn't respond well?

Todd: Actually, yes. Um, it's been recently—the high school that I coach at. A young lady that's a fantastic athlete but it's been four years of really just struggling because, you know, her parents are in it and, you know, they don't help with trying to get her to do right. And she's getting ready to go to college and got a really good scholarship and the coach told her, “The only reason that I'm recruiting you is cause of who your high school coach is.” I don't know whether she doesn't know how to deal with me because I don't—I don't baby her and I don't favor her over the other kids because she is better, and I'm hard on her and she's not used to that. She's used to being, you know, the queen and if she said she didn't wanna do something then everybody fell, you know, in line to her—but that

just wasn't me, you know. I mean, I've been doing this for a long time and that's not my style, you either do this or you get stepping, [laughing] I don't care how good you are. And so, we just never—I know that at some point in her life she's probably going to realize it but right now—it was very discouraging for me coming off of all these people that I have mentored, all—I mean, and some of them haven't been easy, you know, but they'll come back before the end and and say, You know what, you told me this and you know what, I see this. And it's usually within—it's fairly soon. I don't think she's going to see it until she goes off into another situation and she's going to go, Wow, you know, I was all of these things that have been told to me. I just hope it's not too late; I just hope she does well cause she's perfectly capable.

[01:15:07]

Um, but I always tell my kids, You know, you can have all the ability in the world but if the six inches between your ears is not working well it's going to be tough. It's going to be tough. So, I would say I've had some pushback but usually they come around. Usually they come around because I'm the same, I'm just not putting up with foolishness, you know? And, uh, I can see, I have this ability to see where you can go and sometimes I also get these premonitions where I see you falling. And I saw her, I said, “She's going to get hurt her senior year,” and she had never been hurt. Didn't she get hurt this year? But was able to bring her back and she won four conference championships, which no one has ever done. And she missed winning the state by .01.

Brooks: Oh my God.

Todd: That is like an eyelash.

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: I mean, and had been hurt. And I was walking around and coaches were coming up and they said, Girl, you know you can coach. How did you get that girl from getting hurt to there? I just, um, this girl could have been so much better if she could just—if she had listened. I mean, she would have been one of the top recruits in the country, there's no doubt in my mind. But it was a tug-of-war the whole time and—and it's unfortunate. It's unfortunate, um, but she'll see. She'll see.

Brooks: Yeah, and it's like the total person that you were talking about, you're not dealing with just athletic talents, you're dealing with whatever else is going on.

Todd: You have to deal with so—and that's why I really respected and loved Dr. Rice's program because I had always have dealt with the total person, but I didn't have a name for it. Because, to me, it was not just what you did on the track that was my concern. How are your grades, how's this going, how is that going, do you need to

talk? I was always the person they could come to. And sometimes I'm not going to give you the answer that you want—often, you know, but I was always honest. I was always honest and if I tell you I believe in you, I do believe in you, but I can't get up there and execute for you. You have to do it. And, um, even now coaching in high school the kids are very different now. We're coming from an age of everybody gets a trophy. Whether you play or not everybody gets a trophy. So, they don't have that fight, that expectation, that desire to want to be the best because they're not gonna miss any meals, you know. They're not gonna miss not getting a car because they're going to have all these things and so they don't have that fight in them that years ago—I had kids, you know, we didn't have the distractions of the cell phones and everybody having a car and everybody getting awards. You had to earn what you get, and I still preach that; I still tell them, um, you've got to earn this, you've got to earn this, you have to be responsible, you have to understand time management, you have to do your grades, you know. Don't let me have a teacher come up and tell me that one of you is out of order in the cafeteria. I'm not having that on my team, you know, I'm just not.

So, my kids walked around, like, you didn't see them get in trouble because they said, Nah, I don't think I want to have Coach Todd get on my case. Because my expectations of them was high and I've always believed that if you set the bar high they're going to find a way to get over it, but if you set it low they're going to get over that too. So, I always set it high and if you don't get that high then you're going to be high anyway because you're going to go for the top. Not everybody is a pure athlete like this girl, I mean she's pure athlete, but if you work hard, you do what we ask you to do I will be the first one on that line to congratulate you and pat you on the back. And it's like they look up at me and just the mere fact that I'm right there, you can see their whole little face, like, Oh she liked that or, you know, she's happy. Cause if they get out there and just play around I don't say a word to them. They would say, Coach would you just say something? [Laughing] It'd make us feel better, just say something. No. You can't go re-run the race, you know? I'll save it and then imma ask you later, So what happened? What happened? You need to tell me, I'm gonna give you time to figure it out.

[01:20:14]

And, um, so I try to make them accountable, I try to make them understand that, you know, I see track as so many life lessons. And all sports are, and everything you do there are a lot of teachable moments, but I look at track, like, there are the different races and different events: it's so much like life. You know, you gotta run in the sand pits, you're gonna have to jump over hurdles, you're going have to do—you know, you're gonna have to do so many things that track teaches you. And I always tell them—their senior year when we have our end-of-the-year banquet, I have the seniors come down and I talk about where they're going to school. And right at the end of the 50 meters I have a hurdle and I said, “As you step over this hurdle you're leaving from one life to another. And just remember in life that you're going to run into hurdles, but when you get over them you will

find it is solid ground on the other side. So, this hurdle's only temporary; you've just got to figure out how to get over it. Can't go around it, can't go under it, you have to figure out how to go over it." And I give them a sheet of paper called, um, The Road to Success. And I kind of paraphrase; it's something that has been out there, but it's something like, The road to success is not straight, it's filled with curves called friends and this called that, you know. And I'd roll it up like a diploma and put, you know, the year around it and I'd give the seniors that. And I said, "I hope this is something you'll keep with you as you go through college and life that—as a reminder that you can do these things, you just have to keep pushing forward," and that's what we do.

Brooks: Yeah. When you first started working with the ACC did you—how did you feel about putting coaching on hold?

Todd: That was a little tough in the beginning because I had coached and recruited all the kids at Georgia Tech and now I'm at the ACC office and I'm running the championship. So, when you're in the commissioner's office you're supposed to be neutral, you're not supposed to have you—people even today, they're saying, Well don't you like Carolina or Duke? And I'm like, I like them all. I mean it's still hard for me to cheer when they play against each other. I might have some personal feelings that I might like, you know, this coach or that coach or whatever, but you learn how to sit on your hand so to speak. And that was a little tough because until all of my kids graduated, to see them at a championship—and I learned a lot about how coaches of other sports, just how they functioned. Because a basketball coach is not going to be like a baseball coach; a baseball coach is not going to be like the soccer coach. They all had their little nuances that make them who they are, and I can just about go somewhere and tell you, I bet he coaches soccer or I bet he coaches baseball just by their mannerisms. I'm usually right on. Right on, but I remember [laughs], I remember a couple of my early days in the ACC. We would always have a coaches' meeting before we built our new office—we didn't have room—so we'd had a coaches' meeting the night before the championship started. So, the first swim meet was at NC State and, uh, so we had our meeting at NC State. But the meeting was also on Valentine's Day so I had a red suit on and I didn't think anything of it. So, as the coaches are leaving the Carolina coach comes up to me and says, "Dee, next year the championships is at Carolina. Are you going to wear blue?" I was like, "What? You mean to tell me all you had to look at is what color I have on?" And you know what, I found out they all did that. And so if I had on the color of another school they thought, Oh you're for that school [Brooks laughs]. And I learned quickly cause it happened to me one more time somewhere, um, that I had to wear neutral colors.

[01:24:53]

So, I wore a lot of black, a lot of green, 'cause we didn't have a green school at the time. Um, I actually—my favorite color is purple, coming from Northwestern I was in heaven with purple. So, my favorite color all my life has been purple, so I

wore a lot of purple and then Clemson decided to pick up their purple and their orange and I was like, Look, I had my purple first [laughs]. So, but they, you know, so you see Clemson, you think more of the orange than the purple. But I had to really think about that. So, for the ACC Men's Basketball Tournament we used to have two games in one session, then we had a break and then we had two games in another session. So, I would look and see who's in this first session and then I might put on a color of somebody who was in the second session, but in the first session they didn't know, and then I'd change and do the reverse, right? So, I'm thinking, Ain't nobody paying attention to this, so I go somewhere to eat or something and on the break and this lady came up to me and she said, "I see you out there on the floor. You changed clothes didn't you?" [laughs]. I was like, They're watching!

Brooks: Yeah, stop paying attention [laughs].

Todd: Goodness gracious. And then I kept thinking—and then I kept saying, Well, you know what, I'm still, like, the only female, I'm the only minority. They know me. I couldn't be incognito at all, they even knew what I had on, good grief. But it still got to be pretty funny, but I—once I figured out they were watching, I said okay.

Brooks: Gotta watch what you wear.

Todd: Watch what you wear.

Brooks: Just one more thing to think about when you— [laughs].

Todd: Yeah. People don't have--have no idea that coaches get their little—oh so you're fooling with them? It's Valentine's Day! [laughs].

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: That's red [laughs].

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: There's a whole other world out there.

Todd: The whole world out there, but nope [both laugh].

Brooks: So, you were, um, you're considered the architect of ACC championships. What does that mean?

Todd: Well, when I came into the ACC as a coach I had come out of the Big Ten, and the Big Ten was very organized. Our championships were very well-run. When I

came to the ACC, the championships were, at least from the track standpoint, they were horrible. I mean, you didn't know who won anything and at the end of the meet they gave you a box. Here's your plaques for whoever, you know? And I just thought this has got to be better than this. So, I sent—I got in touch with the SEC and the Big Ten, and they sent me their championship books and how they did things and then I kind of took the two of them and added to it and started to, pretty much, design how ACC championships were going to be run. I did a bulletin that went out to the coaches that told them who, what, when, where, and why, uh, did the same thing for officials. I had the order—all those kind of things, so I pretty much created how ACC championships—when the awards were going to be done, um, you know, who gets what awards and that type of thing. So pretty much the whole layout. Now it's like it runs itself but, you know? But coming in you had to make some changes and I wouldn't have made known that had I not been a coach in another league. So, I had the advantage of coming in and saying, Ah, this is not good, you know, compared to where I came from. So, yeah, so that's why they considered me the architect, you know, of ACC championships.

Brooks: And that was a big part of what you were hired to do, correct?

Todd: Yes.

Brooks: Like, that was your focus was, the championships, yeah? So—

Todd: Yeah, my focus was the championship, but 40 percent was to help develop women's basketball. And, um, with that, that means, you know, we—changing sights. I started the Umpire Association, I started the Women's Basketball Officials Association, um, just the whole thing of dealing with those championships. And, uh, there were a whole lot of common denominator type things, but then you do a lot of sport-specific, you know, type of things. So, yeah I can run any sport.

Brooks: Yeah [laughs].

Todd: Any sport. You know, you learn how to listen to coaches, you learn how to understand what's important to them. And that's what I did, and I feel like I did that very well. 'Cause when I met with, um, soccer coaches, for example, especially men's soccer coaches, well, every last one of them came from countries where women don't have a voice, and then all of a sudden this woman is running your championships. So, they got to the point where they wouldn't talk to me they'd turn and talk to each other so I could hear [laughs]. And so, I just had to tell them one day, I was like, Look, you need to talk to me, okay? And if you start talking to each other—you understand the card system: yellow card, red card [laughs], you know? We're going to get this right. And they just looked like, Okay, I guess so, yeah.

[01:30:36]

Brooks: Yeah. What were the biggest challenges that were facing women's basketball at the time when you started?

Todd: Oh, great question. Um, when I started, our Women's Basketball Tournament was in Fayetteville, North Carolina and it was in the Fayetteville Civic Center. Now, mind you, I had never been to an ACC men's tournament or women's tournament so I didn't know anything. So, I go down to look at Fayetteville and it was an old dumpy place, you know? And I'm like, This is just not acceptable. You know, our gyms at school looked better than this. So, I made them bring in crews, they painted the whole place, the locker rooms, I bought—rented big palm trees, the flowers and stuff to put in the locker room and—to just try to dress it up the best I could. So, the very next week—and so—what did they gave the women? I think they gave them all a t-shirt. So, the next week I go and I'm working the ACC men's tournament; it was night and day! I'm like, What? The men had, oh my gosh, they might have gotten a TV, just—it may not have been that but it was something that was so much bigger than a t-shirt. They had the banquet for them, well, we had a banquet, they gave out plaques for the seniors. I had given out roses, cause, you know, I just went, You've got to give them something. So, I went out and got roses and when I came up I gave them a rose. I saw these things the men did and I'm like, Are you serious? So, I went to work.

I started, you know, asking for this and asking for that and they didn't want to put a lot of money into the women I just stayed on them. I just stayed on them until we started getting some equity. And, um, that was the biggest challenge, you know. And then we left Fayetteville and we went to Rock Hill, Winthrop University. And Winthrop—they had a little coliseum that kind of sits off the campus, but it was, it was like a smaller version of the Charlotte Coliseum. So, it was really nice and it was just the right size. And at that point we filled it up because you were right there at Charlotte, you're right at the amusement park, you know, Carowinds. We, you know, had a lot of little advantages to it, but a lot of the administrators didn't particularly like being on another college campus for our championships. Um, but before we went there I was trying to get the women on TV, and, um, I would sit in meetings and listen to people say, Nobody wants to see girls run up and down the floor looking like guys. I heard really derogatory things about reasons why they didn't want women on TV. And I just sat there and listened, I'm like, this is just so much crap. So, as fate would have it I said, Something's going to happen that's going to change their mind. So, they would give us one—they would give us two or three taped delay games; so, you'd the game and then you'd see it later. Well, we found out in research that everybody likes live TV that's going on right there. Well, they said, We're going to give you one live game and it's going to be the ACC Championship Game. And, um, at that time I think we had to play on a Monday because they weren't going to give us a really good prime time. So, we had—our window was a Monday evening was our ACC Women's Championship Game. At the time, it was Virginia and Maryland had been one and two in the country the whole year and they were packing Cole

Field House everywhere. Dawn Staley was point guard, um, they had the Burge twins, they had—these girls could play basketball.

[01:35:13]

So, we get to the championship game and [laughs] they go at it. Three overtimes. *Three overtimes*. Every time the game was ending I was getting ready to pull the table out of the awards—eh, [laughing] I had to put it back. Did this three times. And the TV people were getting hot because the Colonial men's conference was supposed to start, but they couldn't start it because they can't break away from a live TV game. And that changed the whole, uh, face of how they looked at women's basketball because people watched that game, and they said, Oh, you know, this is a great product. And from that point on we started getting more live TV games and that was the breaking point. That was the breaking point. And I was like, [rubs palms together], did it again [laughs].

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: That's amazing.

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: Wow.

Todd: It just happens, you know? Things always happen that are going to be for the best, you know, cause the women deserved it. Uh, I remember that absolutely they were so upset like, yeah we got you, they got you. Yep.

Brooks: Yeah, that's awesome. What else were the big things that you took on with the ACC?

Todd: Um, a lot of stuff in baseball dealing with umpires and dealing with the fact that your women don't play baseball, and I just—last night, Mike Martin, who coaches at Florida State—this is his last go around, um, at the end, and he had a scrappy team by Florida State standards. But anyway, they didn't even know they were gonna get into regional, well they just got won the Super Regional last night at LSU [Louisiana State University], and LSU is probably the hardest ballpark to play in because those people are big time baseball fans. I mean, they packed the place. And he's at LSU, and they won last night to go to the College World Series. I was in tears because I love Mike Martin, but the first time that Florida State had come into the league, we had our coaches' meeting. Coach Martin comes and I'm running the meeting as I normally do, he goes back and he tells his athletic director, he says, “You know, I don't know what's going on in the ACC. They don't even have anybody in charge of baseball there, they have some lady there

was running the meeting and taking notes.” So, of course the commissioner told the AD [Athletic Director], he said, “Well she’s in charge of baseball.” And, uh, so, a few months later we’re down in Greenville, North Carolina getting ready for our tournament, we have a meeting again. So, we start the meeting and, um, coach starts to take over the meeting, he’s gonna talk for me. So, I said, “Uh, guys let’s take a five-minute break. I said, “Coach Martin, I need to see you outside.” So, he comes outside and I said, “Look, I don’t know how you did it in the Metro Conference—” that’s the conference that he came out, “—but let me explain how it’s done here.” So, I explained to him how it worked and at the end I looked at him and I said, “Now I know you wear the pants but I wear the skirt and we’re not going to have any more problems, are we?” He said no ma’am [laughs].

From that point on we have been the very, very best of friends. I mean, the best of friends. And so, I had just written on Facebook earlier, 'cause we were talking about how these kids were scrappy last night and they wanted to win for him. And I actually had tears in my eyes—I wanted him to win so bad. And, um, his wife had told me a few weeks ago at the ACC that, she said, “You know, this team, this is probably not the best team we’ve ever had.” Those kids wanted to win for him last night, you could see it in their eyes. So, he’s going back to Omaha, so someone was writing about how much he liked Omaha, and I said—I wrote back and I said, “And Omaha loves Mike Martin. They love him out there.” So we were having the ACC baseball tournament in Salem, Virginia cause we had to leave Charlotte. We were in Charlotte, but the Charlotte Stadium sits, actually, in South Carolina.

[01:40:00]

And when they had the controversy of the flag, on the—Confederate flag on top of the State House in South Carolina, well, the NCAA said everybody, you know, had to pull out of the state of South Carolina if you had a predetermined tournament there. So, we had to come out of South Carolina, so we ended up going to Salem, Virginia. And, um, a beautiful site but it’s just nothing up there, you know. So, we’re getting ready for the finals and I go through the dugout and—I always liked Coach Martin. Now Coach Martin always sat with his leg like this, he’s sitting in the chair, so I reached over and gave him a hug. I said, “Hey, good luck today,” and I kissed him on the cheek and I said, “that’s your good luck brown sugar” [laughs]. He got so tickled. So he won, he won his first ACC tournament. So, the next week they’re having regionals, right? I come in the office and I hear this man on my voicemail, he’s called me, and he starts singing, “Brown sugar, dun-dun, dun-dun, dun-dun,” he’s singing some kind of song with brown sugar, and he said, “Hey, you think you can come to Tallahassee? [laughs] We can—you’re my good luck.” And that was kind of an ongoing joke that every time I went to a championship, he would win. And so, last night I’m looking at this, I said, I’m not there but he’s going to—he’s gotta win, he’s gonna, he’s gonna win. And they went into twelve or thirteen innings and they were the home team, so when they hit the home run and it brought them up five to four. I was so happy.

And so, people have been saying things—we call them number eleven—we've been saying things all day about Mike Martin and I think about the time when I had to straighten him out [laughs] and we've been the best of friends. So, it's just great relationships, yep.

Brooks: Yeah. How did you end up overseeing baseball?

Todd: It was a championship.

Brooks: Oh, I see, got it.

Todd: So, I did all of the championships, except we didn't have football championships, and then we had someone that did men's basketball.

Brooks: Okay.

Todd: So, I did everything from there, yeah.

Brooks: Wow, wow.

Todd: Twenty-three sports.

Brooks: Yeah, that's a lot.

Todd: Mm-hm.

Brooks: Did you have a favorite championship or is that not allow—track, okay, yeah.

Todd: Of course track was my favorite because that's what I coached and—nobody wants to tackle a track championship. And just to give you an idea, I had some really wonderful stories but, um, we were bringing baseball, the baseball championship to Jacksonville, Florida and that was right before they were scheduled to have a Super Bowl. Well, the guy that was in charge of the Super Bowl had worked at Wake Forest and he was assistant athletic director or something, but anyway, we had had the track championship at Wake Forest and of course I kind of guided the whole school through putting it on. So, he gets up to introduce meet at the quarterback meeting and saying, you know, we're bringing the ACC Baseball Tournament to Jacksonville even though this was a football quarterback thing. So, he said, "I just want to tell you about this lady," and he said, um, "she taught me how to run a track and field championship and after running a track and field championship the Super Bowl is easy." He said—and that was his second one, he ended up doing three Super Bowls—but he says me teaching him how to run a track championship made the Super Bowl easy cause there are so many pieces, you know, different events and, you know. And he said, "If you can run a track championship you can run anything." And I think that was right because if track was my sport everything else was easy. Cause you

either got two teams who are playing each other; once they start playing you're done, you know, but with track you're never done cause you've got this event and that event and this event and [inaudible] and time scheduling. You know, it was a—it's a lot, it's a lot. So, track helped me so much in being able to do all these championships, so yeah.

Brooks: And you were with the ACC for seventeen years?

Todd: Seventeen years.

Brooks: Did you live in or around Greensboro that whole time?

Todd: I did, mm-hmm.

Brooks: Yeah? What did you think about Greensboro?

Todd: I actually liked Greensboro. Um, I had moved from Atlanta, but I had moved from Atlanta pre-Olympics. Atlanta was a different city before the Olympics, once the Olympics hit—now Atlanta is like—I don't even like going there, it's just booming.

[01:45:05]

You know, people came to the Olympics, stayed, chose to stay, and it's just—I think they said something about, it's like nine or ten thousand people almost a week moving to Atlanta. You can't even move, it just crazy. But, uh, when I came to Greensboro—Greensboro was so slow, I thought. And I actually grew to like it, I like it a lot. I like it better than this area actually. Um, but again, I got involved; I was chair of Greensboro Parks and Rec, um, I was on Center for Creative Leadership boards, I was on something all the time. And the ACC kept me busy because all of these national committees, when they always wanted to, a). try to get women and they were trying to get minorities, you know, to representing, you know, conferences and schools; well, with me you can kind of check off two boxes. And so, it was never a time that I wasn't on a committee, I was always on a committee, you know. So I knew that I was a double box-checker, but I learned so much, I mean, it just, you know, put me out there, so many experiences. I still stayed active with the track, um, I got to, you know, coach the World Championships, and go to other countries, and go to other countries with the ACC basketball, and just, you know, I just had a really wonderful, wonderful time. I worked hard, I mean I couldn't have a boyfriend that's for sure [both laugh].

Brooks: Yeah, I saw in your bio about how many different places you've been. Do you have a count of how many countries you've been to, like, for work?

Todd: Mm, no.

Brooks: Okay.

Todd: I know I've been to every continent—

Brooks: Okay.

Todd: —except Antarctica.

Brooks: Mm-hm, that makes sense.

Todd: And I've been to every state in the United States except for South Dakota.

Brooks: Wow, [Todd laughs] okay. Yeah, your bio says you've been to Spain, Poland, Cuba, Venezuela, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, and Sweden, and that's obviously not all. There's obviously way more.

Todd: Yeah, and some places in between.

Brooks: Yeah, that's amazing. Did you like traveling?

Todd: I do and I don't. I like to get there and settle but I don't like the—and now it's really, really different, traveling, but then it wasn't too, too bad. I would get on the internet and figure out, um—like, going to some places where you didn't have, like, restrooms like we're used to. I mean, you know, and I got online and found out there was these portable—they're, like, portable bathrooms that you use, and it has gel, and you could actually use them and discard them, you know [laughs]? I got a few of those [laughs] and, you know, that kind of thing.

Brooks: Yeah, it was kind of being crafty.

Todd: I mean, you just learn. Mm-hmm.

Brooks: Yeah, yeah. Um, so anything else from your time at the ACC? Cause you transitioned from your original role to assistant commissioner, correct?

Todd: Yeah, I was always assistant commissioner.

Brooks: So, you were—okay, yes.

Todd: Yeah, I went from—they hired someone just to do women's basketball and then, um, we were starting student athlete welfare and that kind of thing. So, I kept track and I kept baseball, uh, but then I started doing other things and then they hired—I call them younger people to do these championships. So yeah, but no, I was always assistant commissioner.

Brooks: Right, okay, just different areas of focus.

Todd: Just different areas, right.

Brooks: Sounds like they spread your job around. Um, so anything else from your seventeen years there that you want to touch on?

Todd: Mm, nope, I think we pretty much covered everything. I mean, um, it was just a tremendously great learning experiences. And, you know, you get to hear in the meetings how, however many schools—nine, ten, eleven, twelve schools may have the same situation that they need to handle, but this the school may handle it different and that school may handle it another way, and I learned a lot of different ways to handle a situation. So, it really made me, uh, very knowledgeable on challenges. You know, being able to—how we figure it out, well then I can take pieces from this and that and say, You know, might want to try this or you might want to try that. Those type of things.

[01:50:03]

Brooks: And you mentioned before we started, um, recording about—you had a little trouble getting into, what was it, the country club?

Todd: Yes, yeah. When I was first started at the ACC one of the perks for the commissioners was membership to the, uh, country club. And, you know, my boss sent in the membership and the deposit or whatever they do, and, um, I'm sitting in the office—we were in a real small place at that time, and the other guy that they had hired was coming from the NCAA office and he hadn't gotten there yet. And so, the mail came in and it came in from, uh, Forest Oaks addressed to David. And I could feel like—you could tell it was like a little credit card or something in it. So, I put it on his desk and, um, I said, You know, I haven't heard anything. So, I went around to our business guy and I said, "You know, something just came in the mail for David from Forest Oaks; I haven't heard anything," and I was already there. And so, he said, "Well, let me call and see what's going on." So, he called and he came back to me and he said, "Well, Dee, I called and they said that, um, they said, when you filled out the application that you didn't give them two credit references." And I said, "Oh," I hadn't been here, like, long enough to establish any credit. I said, "But I have my credit report which I'll be happy, you know, to send them that. And that way they can see how I've paid all my bills," and I didn't think about it because I wasn't paying for it. I mean, so why would you need my credit? I wasn't even thinking about it. So, he comes back and he said, "Well, they want you to bring the credit report to them." I said, "Oh really? Okay." So, I said, "Where is it?" And I happened to have it with me.

So, I go out there, and I park, I come in, and when I walk in, I saw the lady's mouth go, [pauses] like that. I didn't think anything of it, so I handed her the credit report and I said, um, "Do you know how to read it?" 'Cause I have a thing

here that explains how to read it. “Um, no, um, no, no I know how to read it.” So, she took it. So, I went to sit down ‘cause they led me believe that they had to interview me first. Now they hadn't done all of this for David, so I went to sit down and before I could get my bottom on the chair, she said, “Oh, that's okay we just wanted to see what you looked like—I mean, no, we just wanted you to come out.” So, they knew I was a female, obviously, but they didn't know I was black. And so, it was all over her face when she saw that. So, I kinda, like, said okay and I got in the car and I remember I had this, kind of a weird feeling, like, what just happened? I just felt like—I mean, I'm in athletics, I'm not used to—I wasn't used to that, you know. And here I've been first in so many places and I just felt kind of a certain way, as they say. So, I went and rode around the, um, country club, looked up at the swimming pool, I'm like, Okay, I think I see what's going on. I still didn't want to believe that this was any issue. So, I went on back and I happened to get in a car accident and I broke my shoulder. So, I was out and I get this letter from the country club telling me that they had denied my admission and that they were sending the deposit check back to the ACC office and they copied the commissioner. No reason; just denied it. So, I called the commissioner, I said, “You know, I got this letter.” And he said, “Dee, I got the letter too.” And he thought, Okay, here she is, newly divorced, single mom, you know, credit's all messed up. He was like, How can I help you? You know, I said, “Gene, it's an outright lie, I'll show you.” I had all A's except for a student loan, and who doesn't have a bad mark on a student loan, right?

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: I had all A's and I said, “I'll bring it to you.” He said, “Well, I was just waiting for you to get well and come back,” you know, cause he felt, like, how can I help her? He didn't want me to feel bad and stuff. So, um, I got back to the office and I handed him my credit report and looked at it and he said, “Oh yeah, it's better than mine.”

[01:55:07]

So, he called out there and the guy got real itchy; he was like, Um, well, um, don't you do a background check on these people before you hire them? He said, “These people who?” And he wouldn't ever say, and so, Gene started feeling—he felt so bad he said—and he wasn't a much older man—he said, “I've never had to deal with this before.” So, he started calling all the country clubs around in Greensboro and found out that none of them had black members. And he came and he said, you know, he said, “I am so sorry that I even put you through this, I had no idea.” And he just felt so bad, and he said, “But I'll tell you what, I'm pulling all of our folks out. We'll join another one cause it's if it's not good enough for you, it's not good enough for any of them.” And he said—I said, “The newspapers have called me, should I say anything?” He said, “No. Right now don't say anything because you're new here, you've got a young child, and you don't know whose kids go to school with your kids. And you don't want to start

off making an issue, but your day will come where you'll be able to tell your story." So, I went on and he said, "Well, I'll tell you what, any club, dinner club, whatever you want to belong to, we'll pay for it." And that's how he handled it. And so, then a few years later, the Shoal Creek incident happened down in, um, Alabama and they were saying that all PGA [Professional Golfers' Association], uh, places where PGA Championship was played had to diversify, they had to have, you know, women or black members, right—

Brooks: What happened in Shoal Creek?

Todd: Hmm?

Brooks: What happened in Shoal Creek?

Todd: Shoal Creek, they denied this black guy, and they had this, um, this PGA tournament—it was big news, it was big news.

Brooks: Yeah, I vaguely remember, but yeah.

Todd: Yeah, and about—they wouldn't admit him to the country club, and yeah. So, it became big news. Well that kind of triggered people to go back and look at my situation, so it came back. And, uh, so, Gene came to me, he said, "Now you can tell your story because now they're coming to you." And, uh, the guy that was in charge, he ended up quitting. I mean, he was just so upset because they just caught him red-handed just like, you know—[sighs] you know. So, then they called me back and they wanted me to join the country club; I said no. I said, "I'm the same little black girl but I was a couple years ago, no you're not going to use me now because you need me to keep this tournament," so I didn't join.

Brooks: Did you ever join a country club?

Todd: Unh-uh. Nope.

Brooks: Just wasn't for you, did it feel like going through it?

Todd: Unh-uh. I just, you know, I mean, I didn't play golf that well to be caring about it so [both laugh]. So, we had this—I was president of the National Association of Collegiate Women Athletics Administrators, I was also their first black president, so we had this big volleyball tournament that we brought in some teams and it was in Lincoln, Nebraska. And, [laughs] so anyway they wanted to play golf, some of the women wanted to play golf. So, one of the host ladies actually had membership at the Lincoln Country Club, but she had membership because her husband had died and that was the only way a woman could get a membership is through a deceased husband or something, so she had a membership. So, she didn't have to wait until two o'clock to go and play golf. So, she got us a tee time at 9 a.m. and [laughs] it was me, an Asian lady, and three other white women,

right? And, uh, that's five people so that's kind of like, you know, so we're playing and if we were going slow we'd pick the ball up so we're not holding them up. And we get to the back nine and you could see, like, this gate and you saw this row of cars just lined up out there. Well, I wasn't paying them any attention; I thought they were parked. The minute I got up and hit the ball and went to get back into the cart, all the carts just took off, just start—they were waiting, they were waiting [laughs]. It's a black lady on the golf course it's not two o'clock, [laughs] you know?

[02:00:06]

Brooks: So, you were like a tourist attraction? Like they were, like— [laughs].

Todd: Yeah, yeah, it was—they were waiting. We laughed about that. I was like, Oh here you go, Dee, you know you always got to [laughing] start something when you come. But they were waiting. They were waiting but we didn't—we kept moving and stuff like that and we laughed about it and they said, Well, you brought the whole city of Lincoln out to see you on the golf course [laughs]. Yeah, so just little stuff like that. It's wasn't always great, I mean, there were times where, you know, I've had people—I had an ACC shirt on one time and this guy was getting gas at a gas station and he looked and he said, “You ought to just take that shirt off and go back to Africa. I hate you, blank-blank.” I was like, Are you serious? And I mean it shocked me, I'm just getting gas and I had to get something out of my trunk and I had a golf club back there and I said, I'll take this golf club and him upside his head, but no I'm not gonna do that. So, I called my boss and I told him what happened and he says, “You know, I'm so sorry, I'm just so sorry.” I mean, sometimes they'd call the office and leave nasty notes, nasty things like, You know, you ought to send—you don't need have anybody in there that's black, you need—send them back to Africa. I mean I've had people call the office and he would just, he would not buy into it, and he would just say, you know, She's very good at what she does, she is our girl and that's the end of that, and if you don't like it don't watch. You know, you don't like it that don't do so and so. You know, he would just tell them. He would just tell them.

Brooks: Did it ever get to you at any point?

Todd: Unh-uh.

Brooks: No?

Todd: Unh-uh, I mean, the thing at the gas station kind of really got to me 'cause I had never been just outright called out like that and it just shocked me. And I'm like, Here all my life I've been—this is all I've worked with, you know, I've always been the only one. I've never had any problem until to get here in Greensboro,

North Carolina and people calling you names and threatening you and stuff like that. No, unh-uh. Nope.

Brooks: Um, so can you talk a little bit about how you transitioned away from or, you know, into your next career move after the ACC?

Todd: Yeah, that was probably not the most wise decision that I've made. Um, I never wanted to be an athletic director, never wanted to be. And North Carolina A&T, which is right there in Greensboro—the school is a great school. I mean, they were just building, I mean it's—great school. So, the chancellor called me one morning and he said, “You know, we've got—” and I knew that the director's job was open cause people would call me about it, but I wasn't interested. So, he called me one morning, he said, “You know, I see that your name is not in here, that you've applied for this job.” I said, “I'm not interested.” And he said, “Well, do you mind just coming and talking to me and, um, you know, maybe as consultant?” I said sure, so I went over a couple times and he showed me around and so forth and, um, so finally he came to me, he said, “You know—”

[Doorknob noises]

Brooks: Oh, somebody's here?

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: Should we pause?

Todd: You want to cut it for just a second?

Brooks: Okay, yeah.

[02:03:34][End of SHE_OH_9_Todd_a]

[Beginning of SHE_OH_9_Todd_b]

Brooks: All right, there you go.

Todd: Okay. So, uh, he came to me and he said, “I think you are, uh, the person for this job. I'd like for you to take this job.” I said, “I am not interested.” He said, “Well, let's talk about it some more.” So anyway, he pretty much convinced me to go on and try it. And I had looked around at, um, all of the growth through the school and stuff. And I'm thinking, you know. I gave him some hard questions, you know, you're going to be here because I don't want to make this move without the support of the president and how long are you going to be here? So, I finally said, “Okay, send me a contract.” So, he sends me a contract and I took the contract to the guy, Fred Barakat, who ran the basketball tournaments and he read it. He said, “You know, I'm not used to looking at it, but something's not right about this. So, let me have my son-in-law—” who was a state senator, Don Vaughan. And Don had actually been chair of parks and rec, uh, when I was vice chair, so I knew him well. So he gets the contract and, um, he calls me, he said, “You have no

protection in this contract can you meet me down at office?” So, I go down and basically he made some changes, he called over the school and he said, “No, she's not coming unless you do this, this, and this.” So, they made the changes. So, I decided to go and, um, my mentors, Big House Gaines, on his death bed, told me he wished I hadn't done it. Dr. Walker told me, “I wish you hadn't done it”. I mean, so people were saying, I just don't think that's gonna be right for you, they were telling me and I'm like, Oh, you know, the chancellor, I got his support. So, the first year it was fine. And he came to me one day and he said, “You're the first person I'm telling this, but I'm going to be leaving. I got an offer to be the vice president, uh, for the American Council on Education and I'm senior vice president, and I'm going to be moving to D.C. But you've got a good contract, you know, you got a good contract.” And I'm thinking, Oh, this is not going to work. And part of the contract said that if they decided they did not want me to be the athletic director, they had to give me a job in the school to fulfill my contract and they could not go and pay me less than the money that I initially started. And so, um, he left and we got an interim chancellor who decided not to say he was interim chancellor, but he said he was chancellor during the interim period. And so, that was one year—he could care less about athletics. Then we get another chancellor who comes who, um, never had football at the school he was at, never talked to me. Um, and there were a group of about twelve guys who just did not want a female athletic director and they had been trying their best to get rid of me. Well, they got to him and he called me in one day and he said, “Well, I'm reassigning you to school of education,” no reason, nothing.

Brooks: Were these coaches that didn't want you there?

Todd: No, these were just alumni; fans.

Brooks: Oh.

Todd: Yeah, wasn't coaches.

Brooks: No.

Todd: Wasn't anybody in athletics. It was a group of people that got to him and, um, yeah, I'm like, he didn't even sit and talk to me. He didn't even—so reassigned me. And it—

Brooks: So, you were in that position for, like, three years?

Todd: Yeah, mm-hm.

Brooks: Director, yeah.

Todd: And he, um—it was so bad that it was—they broke into the regular programming at, uh, in Greensboro to announce that—yeah.

Brooks: Wow.

Todd: And people were crying, athletes were crying, and this club that I was in, the Women's Professional Forum, they lit the chancellor's email up. He got over six-hundred, um, emails blasting him. They said, You know, we don't care about what happens at A&T, we care about what happens in Greensboro. And they happened to be, uh, in Greensboro and you just had a quality person that you just did this to. I mean, he got it. He got it. And so, I went over to the school of education and I became a special assistant to the dean. And I just, um, I had gone on the NCA[A] Baseball Committee, I was the first female on the baseball committee. I could have stayed on the baseball committee because I was at a school that had baseball; they made me get off. They made me get—so, they basically just ruined my athletic career because by that time I'm in my early sixties and nobody's going to hire a sixty-year-old woman with a lot of experience. So—

[00:05:13]

Brooks: Any chance you could have gone back to the ACC or was that not—yeah.

Todd: No, unh-uh. Cause by that time they had hired—gosh, they hired about fifteen people to do my original job. Yup.

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: So, I finished out my contract and then I got the—I became the director of, um, Teaching Fellows for the state of North Carolina. And I hadn't been in the position one month and the state dropped the job, they dropped the whole program. So, I was without a job. So, I ended up losing my house—a whole lot of stuff, it was crazy. I moved here, uh, cause my son lives here and at that time I had one grandchild. And, uh, I started subbing and after a year somebody found out that I had been a track coach and approached me and so I've been doing that ever since. But I'm ready to stop now, I'm tired, I'm ready to find something else. I'm one of those people—I have to work. I'm not—I can't just sit around. And being on, um, being on a fixed income when you get a certain age, you know, you kinda have to do something to supplement that. And um, that's been what I do, you know? And I've traveled enough, I've been enough places, you know, with the ACC. I don't miss not being able to go places cause I, you know, traveled a lot. So, I can't say that's something I didn't do.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Todd: So, um, you know, the only thing on my bucket list is that I would like to be in the finals of *Dancing with the Stars*. I'd like to go to the finals of *Dancing with the Stars*, that's my bucket list.

Brooks: To participate or to watch?

Todd: To watch. Mm-hm.

Brooks: Okay, wasn't sure if you wanted to be dancing.

Todd: Yeah, I wouldn't mind because—

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: —yeah, I wouldn't mind, but I don't have enough celebrity status.

Brooks: That sounds—okay, well—

Todd: You know, to get that.

Brooks: We could start a campaign, you were on a Kellogg's box.

Todd: [Laughs] Yeah, yeah.

Brooks: But, yeah.

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: Okay.

Brooks: So that's a bucket list.

Todd: 'Cause dance is always my—that's my secret first love is theater and dance. And a lot of people don't know that, but that's my first love.

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: Cause when I taught in high school, that's what I taught. I taught dance and I used to choreograph all the shows and stuff like that. So, my first love is theater and dance. I just never, you know, got into it like that. But yeah, I mean, I love *Dancing with the Stars*. I love it, love it, love it, love it. So, that's kind of my little bucket list.

Brooks: Do you know, do you have thoughts on why you didn't pursue dancing or theater?

Todd: I got into athletics, you know, and um, that was taking me on its own course, you know? And as I kept growing within that field then, um, you know, dance was just something I liked to go see and stuff like that. But that is my first love. Yup, you take me to a dance thing or theater, I'm just—I just love it, I just love it.

Brooks: Mm-hm, yeah. And now you have two grandchildren?

Todd: I have two. Mm-hm.

Brooks: Are you pretty close with them?

Todd: Yeah, yeah, they live five minutes away.

Brooks: Ooh, nice, great.

Todd: Mia and Michael. Yep. they're ten and five; Michael will be six next month, yeah.

Brooks: Aww.

Todd: They're a cute age.

Brooks: And did you struggle at all with being a single parent and managing your super busy career?

Todd: I think because I was in athletics that I was able to expose my son to some positive role models in athletics. I had him in a lot of things. And so, I always had a good support system of friends. Um, if I traveled and—I had a whole thing of people who would pick him up and I'll call, come stay with him or—I mean, I had my whole life mapped out, you know, that he wouldn't miss anything and that somebody was always at, uh, you know, one of his games or something if I couldn't be there. But I always tried to plan around making sure I was there for him, and he just grew up to be a wonderful young man. He's a wonderful, wonderful young man. Yeah.

Brooks: Do you think that the two of you are rooted in North Carolina now?

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: Yeah.

[00:09:54]

Todd: Yeah, yeah. Yup, if he moves I'll probably move but, you know, he married a girl from North Carolina and, you know, both kids are born here in Raleigh and um, you know, he works for WRAL now and, uh, he's in sales and he's been with them now about fifteen years. And so, they really, you know, they love Stuart. And he's friends with the guy that, um, nominated me.

Brooks: Mm-hm, yeah.

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: Yeah, nice connection.

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: Um, and then, I mean, you've done so many other things. I mean, we talked a little bit about the Women's Professional Forum that you are a part of, and then your biography says, um, you are a cofounder of Project Gold. That was something with the Olympics, right? Can you tell me about that?

Todd: Remember I was saying about the, um—

Brooks: The different, like, task force?

Todd: When the doctor—yeah, the task force. Um, when Dr. Walker appointed me as chair of the minorities task force and Sandy Knapp, chair of the women, uh, together we founded Project Gold. And Project Gold meant a guaranteed Olympic leadership development. And that's what we trained people about the functions of

the U.S. Olympic committee and volunteerism, uh, that type of thing. So, that's what Project Gold was.

Brooks: Great, wow. Um, any other, like, uh, other professional organizations or other, um—what's the word I'm looking for—causes, I guess, that we haven't talked about that you want to mention?

Todd: Um, well, I was one of the people that pushed for a three-person officiating crew for the women. And that—remember I told you originally we had two people; we had a two-person officiating crew—

Brooks: For basketball?

Todd: —and that's how I happened to get Dee Kantner.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Todd: And, uh, I was at a game at North Carolina and Marion Jones was a freshman playing basketball. And I'm sitting there—and I knew who Mary was because I'm a track person. I'm sitting there and she inbounds the ball and she beats the ball to the person. And I'm saying, Two people can't officiate this game, why do the men have three and the women have two? It just didn't make sense to me. So, I called my counterpart in the Southeastern conference, I said, “We need to do something about this.” I said, uh—you know, we were the two power conferences, um, we shared a lot of officials. And so, Pat and I decided to—when we went to the final four that we would meet with all the other females in all the other conferences, uh, to say, Hey, we need to get together and push for a three-person officiating crew. Well, most of them were against it because it was an economic issue and they didn't want to put the money in it. And one of the ladies said, got up and she said, “We're going to a three-person officiating over my dead body.” Okay. So, we came back and the next year the SEC and the ACC went as a trial, we tried a three-person officiating crew. Then the other conference follows suit. So, we went back to the meeting, she gets up and she says, “Well, you're now listening to a dead person.” [laughs]. So, we're the ones that pushed three-person officiating crew.

Brooks: Yeah. And in terms of, like, um, it seems like you did so much in terms of, like, working on small budgets and finding money. What was your strategy there in terms of figuring out how to get people to invest?

Todd: Well, a lot of that, again, came from my experiences with the ACC where I didn't really have a tight budget because we had money. But then, um, I do remember, like, the University of Maryland, when they were in ACC and they were struggling. And I remember Debbie Yow, who is just retired at NC State, um, doing some very creative things in terms of, uh, tiering sports, and the expectations of the people in the tiers and, and how you're going to budget and spread that budget out. Um, I took some of her ideas and I looked at how, say,

A&T gets their money, and I realized that it was very different because, uh, the majority of their money comes from student fees. And so, everybody that's a student at the school had to pay a certain amount of money for athletic, um, fees and it's mandatory, but not everybody, you know, went to games. And so, a lot of students had a lot of problem, even if you tried to raise that.

[00:14:51]

So, I did some creative things; I looked at everybody's budget and realized that for Division I-AA you only needed, uh, fourteen sports. We had sixteen, and our football budget was so bad that we couldn't have recruited out of Guilford County. So, I looked at how I could cut that pie a little differently and put more money into football. So, what I did—and it became a little bit unpopular—but I dropped men's tennis. And by dropping men's tennis I picked up their operations money and so forth and I put it into football. And, uh, that started the evolution of football kind of coming out of the hole and, um, you know, you can't drop a women's sport, so you have to drop—if you're going to drop anything, you gotta drop a men's sport. So, uh, they have since bought it back, but A&T is now, you know, the biggest HBCU in the country and has the best sports programs because their chancellor now, who actually, uh, was the vice president of North Carolina, uh, the state system—he got a chance to go around and see how all of the state schools operated and he was able to come back to A&T and know where all the holes were, and he invested in the athletics. He invested, and so when you have a chancellor invest into athletics, the school grows. He realized that, and I've said this all along, athletics is the, uh, the front porch of the university and you could have the greatest teachers, professors, whatever, but what you do in athletics, everybody sees it. Everybody sees it. So, when you got a good athletic program, your student enrollment raises. It's, you know, studies have shown that and that's what happened. It's—so, the student enrollment there has just grown tremendously. Student enrollment grows, so does your activity fee so you got more money to deal with. Now people want to pay for you to come and play Wake Forest; will give you \$30,000, you know, to bring your football team over here and play us, you know.

That's how you start generating money, but I was in a situation where we were bad in football, had no money. I mean, so I had a lot of challenges, and things were moving, like I got suggested to move the band a certain place in the stadium. Um, I caught all kinds of crap. Where the band now? Where I had suggested that they go, you know? Cause it opened up more seats for your, um, your season ticket holders, but nobody could see it. And a lot of it was, um, being female, and they just didn't want to listen. They just didn't, they just didn't want to listen. And, um, I look at a lot of things that they do now that were things that I bought up, but I had eighteen people telling me, You can't do it, or giving me reasons why, and just, you know, it was just a fight. It was just the fight all the time. Um, I can say

that, you know, I regret that I did leave the ACC, but I can't look back. I made the move and I have to live with what decision that I made, you know. Um, the best decision I made was getting that attorney to look at that contract because by being able to stay there the length of my contract, at that time, uh, you only needed five years with the state that if you retire, then your health benefits are paid by the state and so my health benefits are paid. So, that's—that is the positive thing—

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: —is that, you know, I don't have to pay health insurance. So, I was there long enough to get that, you know, plus a year. So, it's just something good came out of it. You know, you make a move, you learn. You just—I just wasn't ready to, um, I wasn't ready to get out of athletics and I still feel like I have a lot to give and I just recently applied for the, uh, athletic director at Peace College, downtown. And I had a phone interview last week, I didn't feel great about it. I don't like phone interviews anyway 'cause you can't read what the person is saying, but um, I just felt like talking to him that I'm probably too qualified for them. I mean, like, *way* qualified. But see, I don't look at it that way, I look at what I know I could do for them. So, I'm kind of toying around with whether or not I wanna keep my name in or pull it out. And everybody said, Oh, just wait and see. You know, so I'll take whatever comes, I mean, it will be a way of getting back into athletics.

[00:19:59]

But then you have to remember my age, and women really do get—they—you really do get ageism and gender—sexism when it comes to jobs. And somebody told me that a long time ago, they said, As a woman, by the time you're fifty-five you need to be where you're going to be because your chances of leaving that and going to another job in your area, particularly athletics, is really slim. And I found that to be true cause I never applied for a job until after I left A&T and I haven't gotten one yet.

Brooks: 'Cause you had been recruited all the way through, yeah.

Todd: Every one. Northwestern, Georgia Tech, every one of them I was recruited, so.

Brooks: How do you think we fix that? The ageism and genderism?

Todd: Well, I think there's a conscious effort to try not to do that because when you fill out applications, they don't ask you for dates and stuff anymore. But you can Google me and find out anything you want to and you about and figure it out, you know what I'm saying? So, I—now, and this only happens for females, so they can hire—they'll hire a man eighty years old to sit there and do nothing, but they'll hire him.

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: You know, give him a chance. I mean, they hired Mack Brown to come back and coach football, you know, we're the same age. We're the same age but, um, I don't know. I think, you know, maybe one day that might be okay, but, um, right now it's a little better. But I just felt on the phone interview, I just felt that—I said, you know, they, they're looking for reasons why not, than what this woman could bring, you know. Cause I've turned around every place that I go, I turn it around, but I just didn't think that—I didn't get the feeling that that's what they were looking for. Uh, that they're content with who they are and—see, if I can't make it better, I don't—that's not interesting to me, you know?

Brooks: Yeah, yeah.

Todd: So—yeah, it was, um—it's, we'll see. I mean, my interview was last week but we'll see.

Brooks: Sure.

Todd: We'll see, I mean—

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: You know, a lot of people are calling, uh, the president and stuff, but see, the president is not involved in this. And, um, you know, I mean, it's no doubt I have great references, a great resume, they're gonna have to figure out why not.

Brooks: Mm-hm.

Todd: You know, why not? So, that's going to be hard for them, but, you know, if it's meant to be, it will be, it will be [laughs].

Brooks: Well I have a few, um, kind of wrap up questions. Is it okay if we go over those?

Todd: You know, I think we have covered probably everything, I mean—

Brooks: Okay. Can I just ask you—there's a couple of questions I try to ask everybody—

Todd: Sure.

Brooks: —so, it's nice to have them all, throughout all the interviews. So, um, the first one is what's your definition of success?

Todd: My definition of success is when preparation meets opportunity. I think that, uh, success comes with work, it doesn't just happen. You have to do the things that are necessary to be successful. So, you can't go out and say, I want to be successful. You have to work and do the things that you're supposed to do and make your things better and then success just kind of follows it. I tell, you know, I tell my athletes, I said, “You know, success is like a ladder, you can't climb it with your hands in your pocket, you've got to get out there and pull yourself up and down that ladder. You cannot.” Um, I also tell them that, uh, success comes with making the three Cs work and those three Cs are choice, chance, and change,

and you're the only person that can control that. So, I feel the success is basically controlled by the individual and how much you do, um, but you can't go out and say, I'm going to be successful. You go out and you work hard and you treat people right and you do the things that you have to do and success just follows it.

Brooks: Do you think your definition of success has changed over time?

Todd: No, unh-uh. I think it's pretty much the same.

Brooks: Okay.

Todd: I just, I don't see ever being successful in anything that I didn't work for. Yeah.

Brooks: And what do you think is a notable woman?

Todd: Is a what?

Brooks: Notable woman.

[00:24:56]

Todd: Hm, wow, ah, that's a tough one. I think there's so many. I think a woman that knows who she is—I think a woman that is not afraid to stand up for what she believes. Uh, I think a woman who has crossed some barriers that people didn't expect her to be able to do because she's a woman. Um, I see the woman as being a strong but, yet a loving, passionate person. I don't see a woman that has, say, attitudes and things like that. I see a woman that's just gonna get after it, go forward, um, you know, know who they are and be willing to help others. I see a notable woman as a woman that reaches out and reaches back in bringing other women with her. You know, a notable woman is not afraid of somebody else coming up, you know. Bring them. Bring them, there's room for us, just bring them. Um, that's what I feel a notable woman is.

Brooks: Yeah, that's great. My last question is not something I ask everybody, but have you met Oprah?

Todd: I have met Oprah.

Brooks: Ah, my goodness [laughs].

Todd: I've met Oprah before the people that know Oprah as she is now.

Brooks: Sure.

Todd: Oprah, um, did a show called *A.M. Chicago* and that's when I lived in Chicago and I was modeling and stuff like that. And like I said, the lady, Barbara, introduced Oprah to Stedman. So, it's been years ago, but what's even funnier is that--the guy who was, like, her first love, [laughs] this is the craziest thing. How do I explain this? [Brooks laughs]. I went into a department store and I saw the *Enquirer* magazine and on the front it said, Oprah's secret husband for thirty

years. And I don't get that magazine, but I said, Ah, I'll pick it up, you know, just, I'm just going to be curious every now and then—picked it up. So, I got home and I turned to the middle 'cause I had this habit of reading from the back, this way. I think it's a Pisces thing sometimes [both laugh]. I opened it up in the middle and there is the son of the pastor that baptized me when I was nine years old in Camden, New Jersey. This was his son—was supposed to be Oprah's secret husband. I scream, like, *What?* You know, and I'm reading it, and he lived in Baltimore, and she started out in Baltimore, and it just told a story about how she was so in love with him and how she did this and this and this. I'm still like—

Brooks: Huh.

Todd: I'm not even believing this. So, they are best friends. They're still best friends and it was a couple of years ago, um, his wife had passed away and he went out to Santa Barbara cause his daughter was getting married. And, uh, he contacted Oprah and of course he went out to visit her at the house where she does the TV show and stuff. And, um, he was just telling me about, you know, how they fixed lunch and how they, you know, the whole thing. And they're just really good friends. I mean, he was showing me their texts and things like that, so they're really good friends. So, um—

Brooks: Wow. And you're still in touch with him?

Todd: Yeah, mm-hm.

Brooks: Yeah. So, you run in the same circles.

Todd: I babysitted for him when he was a child.

Brooks: Wow.

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: Yeah. And you—but you met Oprah when you were back in Chicago through Barbara.

Todd: Yeah, yeah, right.

Brooks: When it was just, like, yeah.

Todd: I didn't even know—yeah, I didn't even know he had been involved, yeah.

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: Wow.

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: There's just not that many people say they run in the same circles as Oprah, so—

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: I couldn't not ask about that, so [laughs].

Todd: Yeah. I've actually met her and like I said, uh, you know, with Tim, he, um, he talks to her all the time.

Brooks: Wow, that's great.

Todd: Mm-hm. And she's actually his daughter's godmother.

Brooks: Wow.

Todd: That's right, yeah, she's his daughter's godmother.

Brooks: That's awesome.

Todd: Yeah, it is.

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: That's not a bad godmother to have., how about that?

Brooks: You know a lot of people, mm-hm, yeah.

Todd: That works.

Brooks: Um, anything else?

Todd: I can't think, uh—um, well, I don't know if the interest is there, but I did have a very bad life tragedy with, uh, my step-daughter that I raised, um, was murdered.

[00:29:59]

It'll be eighteen—be nineteen years in September and, um, she was a flight attendant for United and she was dating a guy for two and a half years and he ended up, um, marrying another woman who happened to look like her. And then he didn't want her to know, and she finds out. And long story short, he killed her, he dismembered her. We were looking for her for three months, um, only found eighty bones and it was one of those stories that's been on, um, ID Investigative Discovery, *Motives & Murders*, it's been on there, it's been on, um, *Fatal Attraction*. And that kind of, like, just took a lot of life out of me. Um, this happened in 2000. And, um, I often think, I'm not the person I was before that, I mean, I'm getting back to being that person, but that was the toughest thing I've ever had to deal with in my life, you know? Because I was constantly putting on that outward appearance that I'm okay because I'm Dee Todd and I don't break, you know. And then I, you know, get in my car and just bust out crying and things, so, yeah, And I do tell that story. I am, um, with the Speaker's Bureau for, um, InterAct of Wake County. So, I do go around and I do tell her story and I am a speaker for domestic violence and so forth. So, that's kind of a bit of a change

for what I do, but I—as I tell her story it makes me stronger and, um, and it also gave me a perspective of trying to tell young girls in particular about things that they should look for. Um, you know, don't be so easy to get in a car with someone and, you know, the things that you hear happening a lot, you know, even though, uh, this was just, it was just crazy, just crazy. So, that was the—probably the biggest downer, uh, in my life. And a lot of times people look at you and they say, Oh, you've done all these great things and, you know, and then something like this happens and you say, Why do bad things happen, you know, to good people? And, um, Tracy was thirty-four, so, uh, my granddaughter's named after her and acts just like her, I could smack sometimes [both laugh]. But, um, I tell her story and now, uh, you know, as the years go by, I mean, I'm much, much better, but you know, something you never forget. So, that was probably the biggest down part of my life, but I made it.

Brooks: And was this your husband's daughter or—you said stepdaughter.

Todd: It was—yes, my husband's daughter.

Brooks: Okay, mm-hm, um, so he had her from a previous—okay. Um, yeah, I'm very sorry about that.

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: That's—and I mean, I think it's a kind of an amazing part of the whole—this project. And all people's stories is that we talk about our accomplishments and we don't always talk about, like, the tragedies and it's so important.

Todd: Yeah, it is.

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: I mean, it is, it's part of you.

Brooks: Yeah.

Todd: I mean, it's part of what's happened in my life.

Brooks: Right.

Todd: But, um, yeah, I mean—and it's a major part. I mean it wiped me out cause we, um, we were looking for her for a long time and then we waited almost four years to go to trial because, uh, that's when Illinois had a governor that had pardoned everyone on death row, and we were waiting for them to get another governor before we'd go to trial and the governor that they got was Blagojevich who was trying to sell Obama's seat. So— [laughs].

Brooks: Yeah. So then, yeah, just more of a—

Todd: Uh-huh.

Brooks: So, did it end up going to trial?

Todd: Yeah, we went to trial and one thing that Blagojevich did do was that, um, even though the previous governor had pardoned people that were on death row—it used to be, you could—let's say you got sixty years for first-degree murder. Well, under the old governor, you could serve one day and get one day off. So, in essence, you could be eligible for parole in thirty years that you could get back out. What Blagojevich did—said, if you get sixty years for first degree murder, you're not eligible for parole, you must serve sixty years. So, he got sixty years for first degree murder, he got eight years for concealment of a homicide, which he had served three years in jail before the trial. So, he ended up getting sixty-five years, which he would have to serve sixty-three and a half, something like that, you know. And he'd be a hundred and something, so, in essence, it is a life sentence, yeah.

[00:35:14]

Brooks: It is, yeah. Wow. Well, that's something. Well, thank you for sharing all of your story.

Todd: Thank you!

Brooks: And I appreciate you—I mean, it's kind of a sad note to end on, but I also think it's important, you know?

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: It's not the type of thing we read on a resume, but it's such a part of your life, so—

Todd: Yeah.

Brooks: Yeah, so it was great talking with you. I'm gonna go ahead and—

Todd: Thank you so much. And I'm looking at you, you remind me of an athlete that I had—

Brooks: Oh?

Todd: —and I'm trying to remember where. I want to think Northwestern and I can't even remember her name, but I am looking at you need to look so much like her.

Brooks: Hm, it's the Midwestern vibe, maybe [laughs]?

Todd: Yeah, yeah. Probably the Midwestern vibe. I've got, um—

Brooks: Yeah, I'll go ahead and turn this off.

Todd: Okay.

**[00:35:59][End of SHE_OH_9_Todd_b]
[END OF INTERVIEW]**

